US troops kill 54 Iraqis, many believed to be civilians

Story below, Col. 2

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Son of Estrada pal survives kidnap try

By Julie S. Alipala
PDI Mindanao Bureau

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Unidentified men shot and killed a bodyguard of a son of businessman Lepeng Wee, a close friend of deposed President Joseph Estrada's, during an alleged kidnapping attempt here early Sunday.

Police said that Richie Wee, 19, son of

SON/ A6

WHAT'S INSIDE

- **Gov't to tap foreign loan market anew**
  BUSINESS/B1
- **1 AIDS death per minute**
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- **Pacquiao owes US $350,000 in taxes**
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email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph Tuesday, December 2, 2003 ★★ 54 pages / 5 sections / vol. 18 / no. 357 P15 website: www.inq7.net

Meralco to collect ₱2B from rate hike

Gov't grants Lopez firm 12¢ increase per kWh

By Ronnel W. Domingo
Business

STARTING January, some four million customers of Manila Electric Co. will have to cough up an additional 12 centavos per kilowatt-hour, which would allow the country's largest power distributor to earn some P2 billion more next year.

Meralco said the rate increase would enable it to raise its return-on-rate base (RORB), a measure of profitability, to 10.3 percent next year from an earlier projection of 7 percent. Meralco's creditors want the firm to have a minimum RORB of 8 percent.

Shares of Meralco jumped on news of the rate increase. Its A shares, open to local investors, ended yesterday 5.36 percent or 75 centavos higher at P14.75, while its B shares, open to all, climbed 4.6 percent or P1 to P22.75.

Senate President Franklin Drilon described the rate increase as unfortunate.

"This development is most unwelcome because of the additional burden that it imposes upon the consumers," said Drilon at a press conference.

A militant group slammed the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) for the increase, saying the "hastily approved rate hike" would burden consumers.

Renato Reyes Jr., spokesperson of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan), condemned the decision as "unjust."

"The rate increase is bad for the consumers, bad for business, bad for the economy as a whole. The only beneficiary of this increase is Meralco and, perhaps, the national government which will receive a hefty amount in taxes from the distribution utility," Reyes said.

He said the rate increase would result in a whopping P2.7 billion in additional profits for Meralco next year.

MERALCO/ A18

FOR PEACEFUL FLIGHTS
President Macapagal, Rep. Prospero Nograles, Korean Ambassador Song Sang Ha and Air Transportation Office chief Nilo Jatico release doves during the inauguration of the new Davao International Airport in Davao City. JERRY CARUAL/PCPO-MALACAÑANG

FPJ won't submit to selection process

By Michael Lim Ubac
and Christine O. Avendaño

MOVIE actor Fernando Poe Jr. will seek the presidency in May, with or without the blessings of the main opposition party.

"FPJ is not a member of the LDP (Laban ng Demokratiking Pilipino) or any other political party," said Manny Portes, chair of the Freedom, Peace and Justice (FPJ) Movement. "So he is not governed by their rules."

Should the LDP choose Sen. Panfilo Lacson, a party member, to be its standard-bearer, Poe would still run for president, Portes said.

Asked to comment, Senate Minority Leader Vicente Sotto III said: "I'm not saying anything that is detrimental to the party."

Sotto, Poe's campaign manager, made the statement in front of Portes, who met with him at the Senate late yesterday afternoon.

Sotto said it would be better for Portes to do the talking, refusing to speculate whether the movie actor would go it alone if the LDP supports Lacson.

But Portes said Poe would run for president, "no matter what."

Poe is a "candidate of the Filipino people, that is why there were no politicians when he made his announcement to run for president in 2004 last Wednesday," he said.

Portes maintained that the LDP selection process was a "private initiative."

Portes distanced the FPJ Movement from the quagmire in which the LDP has found itself. The party leadership is locked in an intense dispute over the choice of standard-bearer.

Lacson had already agreed to a one-on-one meeting with Poe on Dec. 3, but as of yesterday, the actor was still undecided to meet with him.

Sotto said he had already informed

FPJ WON'T/ A18

Noli, Loren lead race for veep, poll shows

By Dona Pazzibugan

SEN. Noli de Castro leads all vice presidential contenders, with fellow ABS-CBN host Sen. Loren Legarda and other possible candidates trailing far behind, an independent pollster said.

Pulse Asia Inc. based its findings on the results of a nationwide survey it conducted on Nov. 4-17.

In the senatorial race, Pulse Asia said most reelectionist senators, except for Sen. Teresa Aquino-Oreta, were likely to retain their seats.

Only three of the administration candidates named so far, Video Regulatory Board chief Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr., Trade Secretary Manuel "Mar" Roxas II and Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon made it to the "Magic 12," according to Pulse Asia.

Of the 1,200 adult respondents asked to choose from a list of 12 possible vice presidential candidates, 37 percent picked De Castro while 22 percent went for Legarda. The survey had a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

Senate President Franklin Drilon got 8

NOLI/ A7

Peso rallies amid political uncertainties

By Clarissa S. Batino
Business

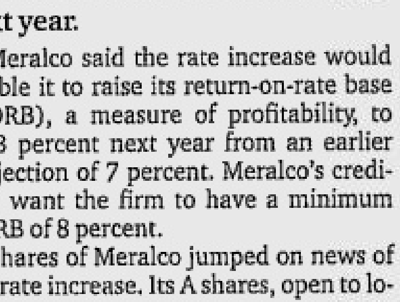
AFTER slumping to historic lows in two previous trading sessions, the peso yesterday shot up to 55.52 to the US dollar despite persistent worries about local political developments.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura said he saw the peso firming up to about 55 per dollar this month due to slower import payments, rising export receipts and huge dollar remittances from overseas Filipino workers this Christmas season.

Even so, technical analysts said the peso's steady decline has taken it to uncharted territory where it has few supports and plenty of scope to sink further.

At the Philippine Dealing System on Monday, the peso opened at 55.70 to the dollar, slid for a while to 55.72, rallied to P55.47, then closed at 55.52.

PESO/ A18


AKO LANG, WALANG IBA!
WALA NA TALAGA!

Defensor: GMA's new 'guy-to-ask'

By Juliet L. Javellana

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo's new campaign spokesperson fired off his first salvo yesterday, but it was aimed at an unlikely target: not the opposition, but the administration party spokesperson.

Housing Secretary Michael Defensor, presented to media as the President's official political and campaign spokesperson, said Lakas-CMD spokesperson Heherson Alvarez, a

DEFENSOR/ A18

US troops repel attacks, kill 54 Iraqis

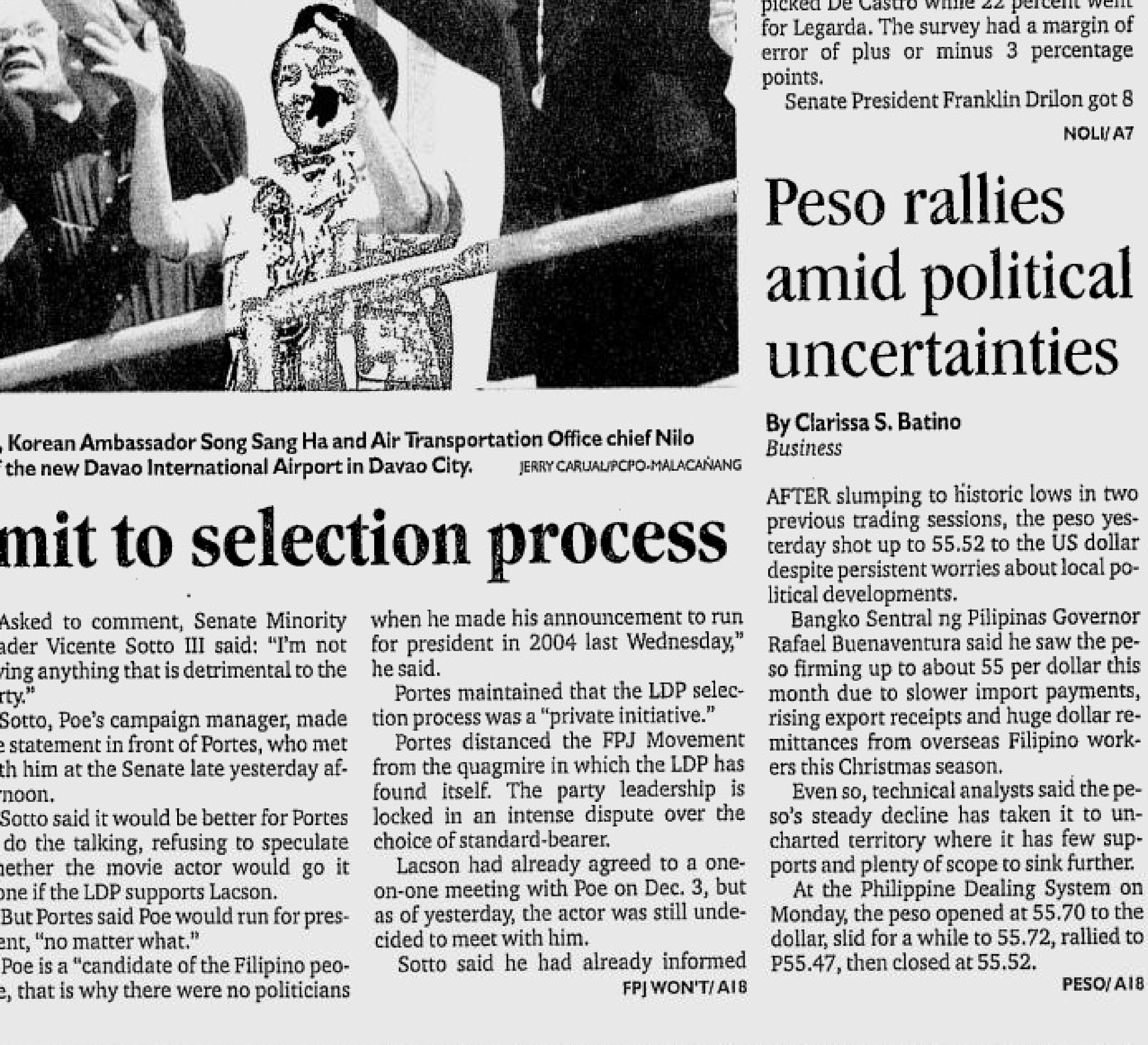
BAGHDAD—Fifty-four Iraqis were killed in the northern city of Samarra on Sunday when US forces used battle tanks and cannons to fight their way out of two simultaneous ambushes, the military said Monday.

But local residents said troops fired randomly at townspeople, and that most of those who died were civilians caught up in the clash.

The battle on Sunday—the bloodiest combat since May 1 when the war was declared over following the ouster of Saddam Hussein's regime—came after a weekend of violence that claimed the lives of seven Spanish intelligence agents, two South Korean contractors, two Japanese diplomats and their Iraqi driver, a Colombian contractor and two US soldiers.

The bloodshed—and grisly photographs showing Iraqis kicking the corpses of the dead Spanish agents—fueled debate in countries allied to Wash-

US TROOPS/ A6



SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS
Bathed in Christmas lights, this house on Apolinario Street in Barangay Zaniga, Mandaluyong City, has become the main attraction in the community. EDWIN BACASMAS

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: The whole country will experience partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms. Moderate to strong winds blowing from the north and northeast will prevail over Northern and Eastern Luzon.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/12/02/03

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Partly Cloudy

PNP revamp starts

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE MUCH-AWAITED top-to-bottom revamp at the Philippine National Police was finally implemented yesterday in the face of a resurgent crime wave that had the public doubting the police's ability to fight crime.

But more than fighting crime, PNP observers were convinced the revamp was intended to put an end to months of intense lobbying for choice positions by persons close to Malacañang.

Deputy Director General Reynaldo Velasco, one of only three three-star police generals, was moved out of the PNP and appointed chief of the Philippine Center for Transnational Crime (PCTC).

Velasco, a former contender for PNP chief has lately been rumored to be on his way out. He was replaced by Director Ricardo de Leon, erstwhile officer in charge of the crucial directorial staff.

Velasco was "thrown" to the PCTC after his alleged backer, former executive secretary Renato de Villa, withdrew his support from President Macapagal-Arroyo and threw it behind her political opponent, former Sen. Raul Roco, a top PNP official told the Inquirer.

Replacing De Leon in an acting capacity is Director Enrique Galang, the President's *cabalen* (province mate) who is considered by many to be the "dark horse" among the candidates to succeed PNP Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr.

As the chief of the directorial staff (TCDS), Galang is the fourth-ranking official at the PNP.

"His appointment as TCDS is very strategic for him," noted another ranking PNP officer. "It appears he is being positioned to be the next PNP chief."

Chief Supt. Reynaldo Berroya, whose term had been extended by the President for one year, was replaced by Chief Supt. Alfredo de Dera Jr. as chief of the civil security group. Berroya is reportedly being groomed to be the next Bureau of Customs commissioner.

Director Robert Delfin was returned to his old post as chief of the directorate for intelligence, replacing Chief Supt. Arturo Lomibao who was transferred to the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG).

Lomibao replaced Director Eduardo Matillano at the CIDG, while the latter was promoted to chief of the Directorate for Investigation and Detective Management (DIDM).

Only two of the five police districts in Metro Manila were affected by the revamp.

Chief Supt. Rolando Sacramento, who was scolded by the President earlier for failing to stem illegal gambling in his jurisdiction, was replaced as Eastern Police District chief by Chief Supt. Oscar Valenzuela. Sacramento was named chief of the Police Security and Protection Office (PSPO).

Chief Supt. Jose Gutierrez, erstwhile Southern Police District director, was appointed chief of finance service. Chief Supt. Prospero Noble, former PSPO chief, is the new SPD director.

In a statement, Ebdane said he would not hesitate to "throw the book at police commanders who will be remiss in their duty to prevent heinous crimes in their areas of responsibility."

The new members of the directorial staff are Chief Supt. Marcelo Navarro Jr. (human resource and doctrine development), Chief Supt. Victor Luga (police community relations) and Director Avelino Razon (operations).

Director Rolando Garcia is the new chief of Region 7, Chief Supt. George Aliño of Region 6, Chief Supt. Reynaldo Varilla, Region 4-A; Chief Supt. Servando Hizon, Region 9; Chief Rowland Albano, Cordillera Autonomous Region; Chief Supt. Doroteo Reyes, Region 10, and Chief Supt. Jaime Caringal, Region 12.

Chief Supt. Jesus Verzosa, under whose watch as Intelligence Group chief the Indonesian terrorist Fathur Rohman al-Ghozi escaped from Camp Crame in July, was appointed Matillano's deputy at the DIDM.

The rest of the new appointees were Chief Supt. Antonio Billones (deputy NCRPO chief), Chief Supt. Ricardo Quinto (logistics support service), Chief Supt. Marcelo Ele (legal service), Senior Supt. Ricardo Dapat (maritime group), Senior Supt. Leopoldo Bataoil (police community relations group), and Senior Supt. Augusto Angcanan Jr. (deputy chief of the directorate for research development).

Senior Supt. Geary Barias is the new chief of headquarters support service, Senior Supt. Ismael Rafanan of the intelligence group, Senior Supt. Silverio Alarcio Jr, special action force; Senior Supt. Alex Paul Monteagudo, firearms and explosives division, and Senior Supt. Joel Goltiao, public information office.

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Troop movement 'a false alarm' but Palace ready

By TJ Burgonio,
Juliet L. Javellana
and Christian Esguerra

IT WAS a long way from April Fools' Day, but Malacañang seemed to have been taken in again.

The Presidential Security Group jacked up perimeter security at the Palace grounds late Sunday afternoon after an "unusual movement" of eight truckloads of uniformed Navy men from Cavite to Makati City set off fresh rumors of a military coup.

But it turned out that the 120 Navy engineers in the trucks were fresh recruits returning to barracks at the Bonifacio Naval Station in Fort Bonifacio after training at the Marine Training Base in Ternate, Cavite.

"I think that was a false alarm," said Lt. Col. Daniel Lucero, military chief information officer, after the Armed Forces of the Philippines general headquarters informed Malacañang that it was "an authorized, sanctioned and approved movement."

Rumors of a re-run of the failed July 27 mutiny had spread like wildfire following the sighting of the trucks rumbling down Villamor Air Base in Pasay City at around 5:40 p.m.

A civilian alerted Malacañang by mobile phone, prompting the PSG to declare a red alert and deploy three armored personnel carriers (APC) at the Palace main gate. This was a precautionary measure against any "untoward incident," according to a PSG official who requested anonymity.

Ever since over 300 disgruntled officers and men seized a hotel in Makati City more than four months ago, the public has been suspicious of troop movements in Metro Manila.

Lucero said the military was currently drawing up measures to prevent future troop movements from creating "undue alarm." He did not give specifics. He also denied reports of a missing APC.

He noted that the military remained on white alert, the lowest level, and was in fact pulling out two platoons deployed at the premises of five TV stations, owing to the "long (period of) peace" in the metropolis. The troops would instead be "utilized... to beef up our counter-kidnapping task force," he told reporters.

The soldiers, posted at the TV stations after the military uncovered evidence that the July mutineers had plotted to take over GMA-7 and dzRH, would be placed under the the National Capital Region Command, Lucero said.

Revived last month, the NCRC is tasked to counter threats posed by terror groups, communist insurgents and coup plotters. It has lent a unit to the government's fresh anti-kidnapping drive.

Also widely circulated on Sunday evening were text messages about troop movements elsewhere, including one purportedly somewhere in Mindanao, and another in northern Luzon. Although they did not officially raise their alert levels, both the Philippine National Police and the AFP ordered verification of the reports.

"They were all rumors," Director Eduardo Matillano, chief of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, said yesterday. "What's happening every day is a coup involving all these text messages."

Chief Supt. Vidal Querol, Region 3 police director, said these false alarms were part of "ugly politicking" possibly involving enemies of the Macapagal administration. But he said it could also be the work of people who had nothing better to do.

"Whoever are behind all these coup rumors are just trying to infuriate the government," he told the INQUIRER. "They know very well that (if) the government is distracted, they have won part of the battle."

Military intelligence units, one source told the INQUIRER, were checking reports that groups and personalities identified with the political opposition were behind the so-called destabilization efforts. These people could be up to something "drastic," he said.

In Malacañang, President Macapagal-Arroyo downplayed Sunday's incident, and said that the PSG's "preemptive measures" had shown the armed forces' readiness to deal with any crisis.

"We must remain calm and undistracted by these events, as well as by the heated political controversies being thrown about by partisan quarters," she said.

Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye reported that the red alert at the Palace grounds was immediately scaled down as soon as the report was "confirmed as false."

GMA allays fears of rigged polls in May

By Gil Cabacungan Jr., Martin Marfil and Christine Avendaño

WITH computerized elections nationwide virtually impossible at this time, President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday moved to assuage mounting fears by her political rivals of massive cheating in next year's presidential elections.

The Commission on Elections is pushing for the computerized counting of ballots nationwide instead of limiting the automation to selected areas as recommended by Congress in a joint resolution.

Comelec now pins its hopes that Ms Macapagal would veto the resolution which will limit the automated counting of votes to only 15 areas of the country.

But Sen. Edgardo Angara favors selective automation, saying there were not enough machines to computerize the canvass of votes nationwide and that Malacañang's insistence on a broader implementation was a prelude to massive cheating.

Angara said the Comelec "is defying the will of Congress" with its bid to hold a nationwide automated counting instead of Congress' recommendation for selective automation.

There are 1,614 cities and municipalities in the country while Comelec has 1,991 counting machines and 76 extra machines which can be deployed to more densely populated areas. The Comelec said there will be one counting machine per 16,000 to 20,000 voters.

Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos said the Bicameral Committee of Congress decided on selective automation on the belief that the physical transfer of uncounted ballots to the city or municipality counting centers was "too risky" and could be an opportunity for hijacking, ballot switching and other attempts at cheating by "desperate candidates."

To douse fears that the polls will be rigged, Ms Macapagal yesterday agreed to consult even her political rivals in deciding how to go about the computerization of next year's elections.

"Let us not allow mudslinging to contaminate the electoral computerization program. This is vital to national stability and progress and I ask for a consensus of all parties and political leaders in this regard," Ms Macapagal said in a statement.

The President said the automation of poll services in May 2004 was a "fundamental democratic reform." "Let us make a final move to infuse greater credibility in the polls and greater faith in democracy," the President said.

Concerns that the 2004 elections would be marred by cheating, vote-buying and violence were further heightened by presidential aspirant Raul Roco's declaration that he would lead a charge to Malacañang if the administration would cheat to ensure its victory at the polls.

In an "Open letter to the Filipino people", Abalos yesterday tried to explain why it flip-flopped on the automation of the 2004 elections.

Take HIV test for love, DOH urges OFWs

By Blanche S. Rivera

"IF you really love me ..."

The Department of Health yesterday urged spouses, girlfriends and boyfriends of returning overseas Filipino workers to ask their partners to take an HIV test before resuming sexual activity.

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit noted that OFWs continued to be the main transmitters of the human immunodeficiency virus, accounting for a third of all registered cases in the country.

Official figures show 1,935 HIV infections since 1984, with only 628 resulting in full-blown AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome).

A "Consensus Report" by the World Health Organization Western Pacific and the DOH, available on the WHO website, estimates the actual number of HIV infections at just over 6,000 as of 2001. Dayrit said most of these could be OFWs.

The Philippine National AIDS Council noted a 12 percent increase in the HIV cases among OFWs—from 20 percent of the total number in 2000 to 32 percent this year.

Dayrit cited two new cases in Angeles, Pampanga where the women were found to have been infected by their OFW husbands.

AIDS could easily spread in the country through Filipino workers who have had "risky sex behavior" abroad, the Health chief warned during a press briefing yesterday in celebration of World AIDS day.

Dayrit said the DOH was appealing to the spouses and partners because the government could not force the returning workers to submit to testing. "Confidentiality will be maintained," he assured those who would go voluntarily. "And if found positive, they will get help." *With AFP report*

Gov't will go after JI, MILF warned

GMA: We'll fight terrorists even if it meant scuttling peace talks

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and TJ Burgonio

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday said the government would continue to go after terrorists even if it meant scuttling the peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

"The government will not allow the peace process to stand in the way of the overriding fight against terrorism," Ms Macapagal said in a statement.

The MILF, Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the other day, continued to support regional terror group Jemaah Islamayah's training regime in Mindanao.

But the MILF yesterday accused Ermita of trying to derail the peace talks by rehashing the "old issue" of the JI training camps.

"Ermita's statement is provocative. It hinders rather than helps our efforts to achieve comprehensive peace. It is a violation of the ceasefire agreement," said Eid Kabalu, MILF spokesperson, in a phone interview.

Ermita had said MILF members were training with JI operatives in two camps in Lanao del Sur and Lanao del Norte.

The camps, where Indonesian JI members were reportedly honing their bomb-making skills, are believed to be in MILF territory.

"I have directed the government peace panel to bring this matter to the attention of the MILF in the proper forum. We have asked the MILF to purge itself of terrorists and we have a standing commitment from the MILF to do so," the President's statement said.

Negotiations toward a final peace agreement between the government and the MILF were supposed to have started six months ago but concerns about the secessionist group's ties to international terrorist organizations have stalled the talks set in Malaysia.

Kabalu said that by his statements, Ermita was sending mixed signals to the military, which had stopped its operations against the MILF following a mutual cease-fire agreement in June.

"They're creating a scenario of doubt on the sincerity of the MILF in the peace talks," Kabalu said.

He said the government should probe the alleged training of JI operatives instead of speaking at length about the "recycled issue."

"They should have investigated this, instead of making irresponsible statements without any basis," Kabalu said, reiterating that the MILF camps were open to any investigation.

A seven-man advance party from Malaysia is due to arrive in Mindanao to monitor the conduct of the ceasefire, which is one of the prerequisites for the resumption of the peace talks in Kuala Lumpur.

Kabalu said Ermita's statement was aimed at covering up the government's failure to comply with agreements made during exploratory peace talks with the MILF earlier this year, such as the pullout of troops from the Buliok complex.

"That's the reason the peace talks have been put off a lot of times," he said.

Kabalu said Ermita's statement was also aimed at turning public attention away from Metro Manila, where there has been an upsurge in heinous crimes and coup talk.

"This is a diversionary tactic meant to shift attention away from Metro Manila," he said.

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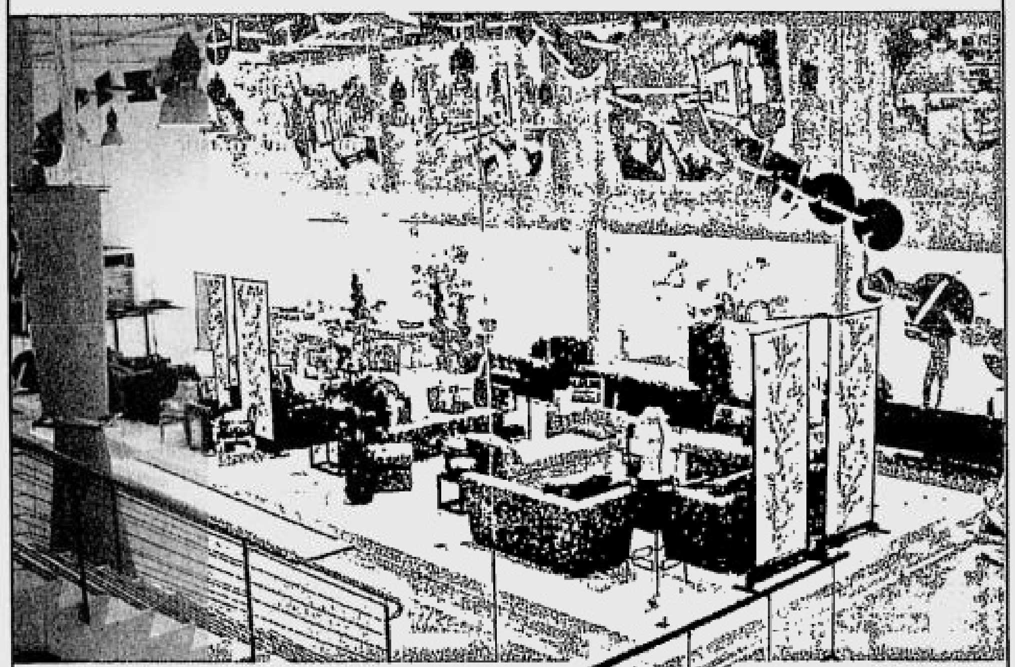

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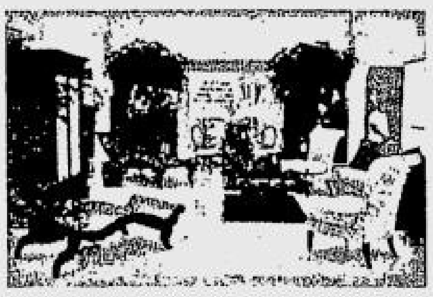

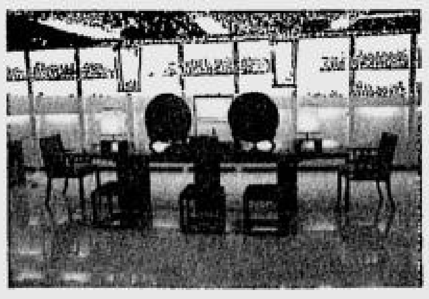

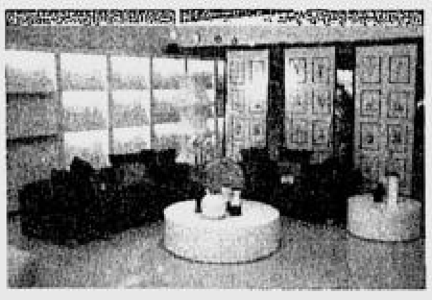

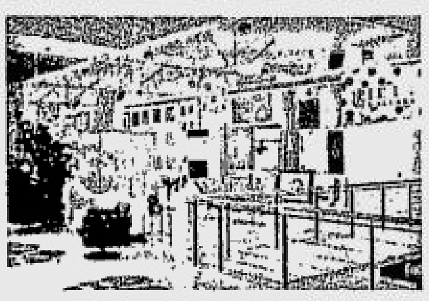

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OPENING HOURS, MON-FRI: 8:00AM-7:00PM SAT: 8:00AM-5:00PM

GMA orders agriculture dep't to move head office to Mindanao

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday ordered the Department of Agriculture to relocate its head office to Mindanao in a bid to transform the island into the country's food basket.

"We need to maximize Mindanao as the food basket. Agricultural modernization and agricultural policies must emanate from Mindanao, not Manila," the President said in a speech at the opening of Davao International Airport.

"That is why this morning, I instructed [Agriculture] Secretary Cito Lorenzo that the Department of Agriculture shall transfer to Mindanao," Ms Macapagal said in a press conference at the departure lounge of the modern airport.

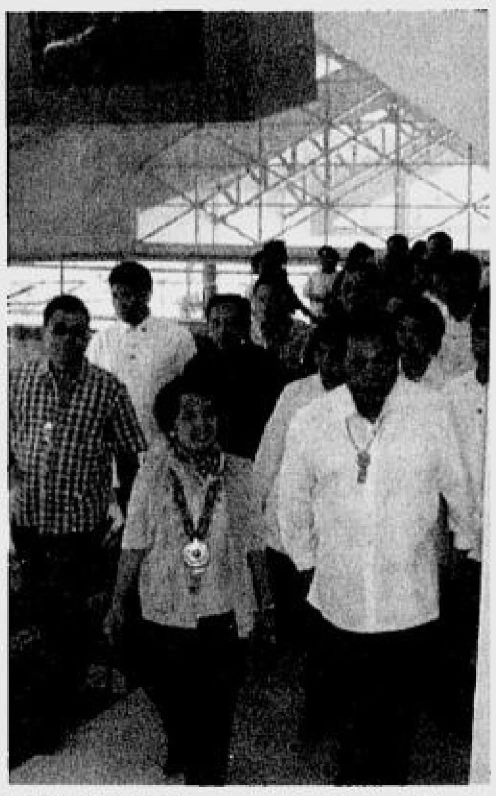
The new airport in Davao, the country's second largest city, has a capacity of 1.2 million passengers and 85,000 tons of cargo a year and can service up to 10 planes every hour.

Ms Macapagal said Lorenzo would hold office in Mindanao, while two DA undersecretaries for Luzon and the Visayas would stay in Manila.

"Food in every table," she said, "is what Mindanao would bring to the entire country."

"That is what Davao International Airport will give—more power for Mindanao to be that center in our country," she said.

Ms Macapagal said Lorenzo was "very enthusiastic" about the transfer and would submit his phase-in program for it soon.



PRESIDENT Macapagal tours the new Davao International Airport with Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza and Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte Monday.

BING GONZALES/PDI MINDANAO BUREAU

But with only five months left before the May 2004 presidential elections, Malacañang could not explain why the decision to transfer DA is only being made now.

Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said the idea of transferring the DA to Mindanao had been considered for quite some time.

The November survey of Pulse Asia Inc. showed that Mindanaoans would only vote for Ms Macapagal if she was not running against action star Fernando Poe Jr. who, the polling firm said, is the heavy favorite of Mindanao.

Thus, the President took advantage of the occasion to court Mindanaoan votes, saying she came to the inauguration even if she was "nursing a very bad cold."

"That's why even if I am nursing a very bad cold, I could not help but be here with all of you," she said.

"I had been with you in your dreams from the beginning and we must always be together to make the dreams come true because our ultimate dream is that Mindanao will be able to be united and victorious over the problem of poverty and Mindanao will truly be the food basket, tourist destination and the agro-industrial center that will bring about prosperity and self-sufficiency and a winner in the battle against hunger for the entire people of the Philippines," she said. *With AP report*

More Pinays leaving due to 'bleak outlook'

By Martin P. Marfil

MIGRANT groups yesterday predicted that more Filipinas would go abroad, most of them to Japan, because of the "bleak outlook for Philippine economy and society getting more gloomy."

"We foresee an increase in the next few years in the number of Filipino women flocking to Japan in search of a better life for themselves and their families," the Batis Center for Women said in a paper read yesterday during a forum on ways to end violence against women.

According to government data taken in 2002 and presented at the forum, out of 288,155 "new hires" for overseas jobs, 210,353—or 73 percent—were women.

The figure for women workers going to Japan was much higher. Out of 77,870 overseas workers who went there, 73,494 were deployed as entertainers, 95 percent of whom were women.

Another migrant group, Kanlungan, said that Filipino women were deployed to other countries, mostly as domestic workers, nurses and caretakers.

The migrant groups said the women workers face a big risk of being abused sexually, physically, psychologically and verbally.

"If we do not seriously find solutions to the problems faced by entertainers in Japan, many of these women will come home not with their desires fulfilled but with their dreams shattered," Batis said in its paper.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Tuesday, December 2, 2003
1st Week of Advent

1st Reading: Is 11:1-10
Gospel: Lk 10:21-24

Jesus was filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit and said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and made them known to the little ones. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. I have been given all things by my Father, so that no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and he to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."

Then Jesus turned to his disciples and said to them privately, "Fortunate are you to see what you see, for I tell you that many prophets and kings would have liked to see what you see but did not, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it."

Commentary

Jesus gives praise and thanksgiving to the Father. The bond of Jesus and His Father is fundamentally rooted in love and affirmation. Jesus affirms His Father and likewise the Father affirms Jesus. The mutual love and affirmation between Jesus and His Father is shared to those who are looked down and rejected. The good news of Jesus is the message of affirmation and love especially for the "little people," the children, the poor, the downtrodden and the outcasts. The little ones are the special recipients of the revelation of God because they are the ones that need God's love most.

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RP to sign UN anti-graft pact in Mexico

THE PHILIPPINES will sign the United Nations Convention against Corruption during a high-level political signing conference in Merida, Mexico, on Dec. 9-11, Foreign Secretary Blas Ople said yesterday.

"This agreement reflects our own values and embodies our aspirations. Like other countries, we are concerned about the seriousness of the problems and threats that graft and corruption pose to the stability and security of societies, and how they undermine the institutions and values of democracy," the secretary said.

Ople said the Philippines would also "move decisively" for the agreement's ratification.

A delegation led by Justice Secretary Simeon Datumanong and Sen. Edgardo Angara is set to attend the signing conference. "Datumanong has been vested with full powers to sign this important and historic treaty," Ople said.

One of the country's major contributions to the formulation of the treaty, the foreign affairs chief said, was the provision that urged governments to return stolen assets to the countries that owned them.

"We are determined to more effectively prevent, detect and deter the international transfer of illicitly acquired assets, and strengthen international cooperation in assets recovery," he said.

Ople said the new treaty, together with such other accords as the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime enforced last month, "form a strict regime of international law that delivers a serious blow to crime and corruption."

The Philippines also welcomed the UN's declaration of Dec. 9 as International Anti-Corruption Day, according to the secretary.

Aside from Datumanong and Angara, the other members of the Philippine delegation are Ambassador to Vienna Victor Garcia III, Ambassador to Mexico Justo Orros, Overall Deputy Ombudsman Margarito Gervacio, Presidential Anti-Graft Commission chair Dario Rama, Presidential Commission on Good Government Commissioner Ruben Carranza, Assistant Justice Secretary Ricardo Paras, Justice Oscar Garcia, consul Amelita Aquino and lawyer Johnas Lamorena. *Jerome Aning*

10th International Meeting of the Federation of ASEAN Urological Association
and the 46th Annual Convention of the Philippine Urological Association
December 4 - 7, 2003, EDSA Shangri-la Hotel, Manila, Philippines

Theme: FAUA: A Decade After

MALACAÑAN PALACE
MANILA

It is my pleasure to welcome the participants to the 10th International Meeting of the Federation of ASEAN Urological Associations (FAUA) to our country.

While advanced in the field of health have already had a profound impact on the quality of modern life, there are still numerous challenges that need to be addressed. Gatherings such as this meeting are important to facilitate exchange of information, validate discoveries and practices that would improve the delivery of health services across countries.

The recent SARS problem affecting several countries is a wake-up call for medical practitioners to remain vigilant against health hazards that might affect our people. Indeed, emphasis should be given to prevention and research for us to be able to eradicate health threats even during their inception.

I welcome this gathering as your organization's answer to the challenge of upgrading your skills in the field of urological health. May you strengthen your partnership for the greater benefit of the ASEAN people.

I wish you a fruitful meeting. *Mabuhay!*

(Signed)
GLORIAL MACAPAGAL-ARROYO
President
Republic of the Philippines

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MESSAGE

In behalf of the Organizing Committee, I would like to welcome you to the 10th International Meting of the Federation of ASEAN Urological Associations (FAUA) and the 46th Annual Convention of the Philippine Urological Association (PUA). It would be at our utmost pleasure to have the great minds in the field of Urology convene and share their knowledge and expertise. We therefore hope and expect that each and every one of you will participate actively for the successful staging of this meeting.

It is but fitting to liken this convention to our country that holds 7,100 islands with varied cultural views yet unified under one flag. This scientific meting will provide a venue for varied ideas and newfound knowledge to be gathered collectively to create a greater and unified view of the urologic craft. And all of this for a common cause. That is, to serve patients well.

Best regards,

DR. LESTER A. GARCIA
President, FAUA
President, PUA
Over-all Chairman, 10th FAUA Organizing Committee

GENERAL PROGRAMME

04 December 2003 (Thursday) – Day 1
1000 - 1130H Opening Ceremonies
1130 - 1200H Opening of Exhibits
1200 - 1330H Industry Sponsored Lunch Symposium 1
With the support of Novartis Healthcare Phils. Inc.
"The Role of Bisphonates in the Management of Metastatic Prostate Cancer"
Speaker: Prof. Anthony Costello, Australia
1330 - 1600H SIMULTANEOUS POST-GRADUATE COURSES
I. ENDOUROLOGY
1300 - 1330H Registration
1330 - 1340H Introduction and Course Description
1340 - 1400H Patients Selection and Preparation
Planning the Approach
Renal Anatomy (Endourological Considerations)
Dr. Jesus Benjamin L. Mendoza, Philippines
1400 - 1430H Percutaneous Access to the Lower Pole and Upper Pole
Establishing Access
Dilatation of the Nephrostomy Tract
Rigid and Flexible Nephroscopy
Instrumentation for PCNL
Nephrolithotripsy (Ultrasonic /EH / Laser)
Dr. Michael Y.C. Wong, Singapore
1430 - 1450H Problems and Complications that can happen after Surgery
Principles and Pitfall
Dr. Luis N. Florencio, Jr., Philippines
1450 - 1515H Ureteroscopy: Patient Selection and Preparation
Indications for Ureteroscopy Upper Tract Anatomy
Preparation for Ureteroscopy
Dilatation of UVJ and Ureter Ureteroscopic Lithotripsy Technique
Ultrasonic and Laser Lithotripsy
Complication of Ureteroscopy
Dr. Dennis G. Lusaya, Philippines
1515 - 1535H NonLithogenic Applications of Percutaneous Surgery
Perc. Endopyelotomy
Perc. Management of Urothelial Tumors
Dr. Jesus Benjamin L. Mendoza, Philippines
1535 - 1600H Case/Panel Discussion
II. MODERN PROSTATE BRACHYTHERAPY A TEAM APPROACH (MACTAN I)
1330 - 1340H Introduction and Course Objective
Dr. Jason L. Letran, Philippines
1340 - 1355H Indications, Contraindications, Patient Selection and Preparations
Dr. Reynaldo C. dela Cruz, Philippines
1355 - 1410H Volume Study and Operative Implant
Dr. Jason L. Letran, Philippines
1410 - 1425H Radiation Physics, Treatment Planning and Radiation Safety
Dr. Domingo E. Ganzon, Philippines
1425 - 1440H Procedural Complications and Management
Dr. Pedro L. Lantin III, Philippines
1440 - 1600H Laboratory Sessions
Dr. Benjamin L. Ramos, Philippines
Dr. Manuel Jaime P. Yuhico, Philippines
Mr. Eliseo S. dela Cruz, Philippines
Prostate Volume Study
Seed Implant
Treatment Planning
III. URODYNAMICS (Mactan I)
1330 - 1345H Introduction of Program
Dr. David T. Bolong, Philippines
1345 - 1415H Basic Urodynamics and Terminologies
Dr. Jose Rizalito C. Catipay, Philippines
1415 - 1500H The Neurogenic Bladder
Dr. Ananias C. Diokno, USA
1500 - 1515H Female Urology
Dr. Marie Carmela M. Lapitan, Philippines
1515 - 1530H Bladder Outlet Obstruction
Dr. Edgar U. Lim, Philippines
1530 - 1600H Question and Answer
Dr. Eduardo R. Gatchalian, Philippines
1600-2100H **Welcome Cocktails and Reception**

05 December 2003 (Friday)- Day 2
0730-0800H HIGHLIGHTS
1. Urodynamics
Dr. Immaculada Corazon C. Umbin, Philippines
2. Endourology
Dr. Silvano A. Salleng, Philippines
3. Brachytherapy
Dr Manuel Jaime P. Yuhico, Philippines
0800-0830H STATE OF THE ART LECTURE 1
Chairman: Dr. Dennis P. Serrano, Philippines
PCNL - Current Issues
Lecturer: Dr. Geert G. Tailly, Belgium
0830-0900H STATE OF THE ART LECTURE 2
Chairman: Dr. Dennis P. Serrano, Philippines
Latest Trends in ESWL
Lecturer: Dr. Geert G. Tailly, Belgium
0900-0930H FAUA LECTURE 1
Chairman: Dr. Jose Albert C. Reyes III, Philippines
"Role of Open Surgery for Renal Calculi"
Lecturer: Prof. Djoko Rahardjo, Indonesia
0930-1030H PANEL DISCUSSION 1
Chairman: Dr. Telesforo E. Gana, Jr., Philippines
Co-Chairman: Dr. David T. Consigliere, Singapore
Best Treatment for Nephrolithiasis – ESWL or PCNL
Panelists: Dr. Geert G. Tailly, Belgium
Dr. Jesus Benjamin L. Mendoza, Philippines
Dr. Nelson A. Patron, Philippines
Dr. Supoj Ratchanon, Thailand
1030-1100H Coffee Break
1100-1200H PANEL DISCUSSION 2
Chairman: Dr. Dennis G. Lusaya, Philippines
Co-Chairman: Dr. Alfredo S. Uy, Jr., Philippines
Best Treatment for Ureterolithiasis – Ureteroscopy vs. ESWL
Panelists: Dr. Geert G. Tailly, Belgium
Dr. Michael Y.C. Wong, Singapore
Dr. Marcelino M. Morales Jr., Philippines
Dr. Jesus Benjamin L. Mendoza, Philippines
1200-1330H INDUSTRY SPONSORED LUNCH SYMPOSIUM 2
With the support of Yamanouchi Philippines, Inc.
"Present Status and Future Prospect of BPH Mngt"
Speaker: Prof. Frans M.J. Debruyne, Netherlands
1330-1400H STATE OF THE ART LECTURE 3
Chairman: Dr. David T. Bolong, Philippines
Management of Severe Hypospadias
Lecturer: Dr. Ranjiv I. Mathews, USA
1400-1430H STATE OF THE ART LECTURE 4
Chairman: Dr. Reginald G. Bautista, Philippines
Laparoscopy in Pediatric Urology
Lecturer: Dr. Chung Kwong Yeung, Hong Kong
1430-1530 PANEL DISCUSSION 3
Chairman: Dr. Carlos Ramon N. Torres, Jr., Philippines
Co-Chairman: Dr. Michael John Francis V. Gaston, Phils
Vesicoureteral Reflux
Panelists: Dr. Ranjiv I. Mathews, USA
Dr. David T. Bolong, Philippines
Dr. Chung Kwong Yeung, HongKong
1530-1700H PUA Business Meeting and Election of Officers
PBU Meeting
1700-2000H **FAUA/ PUA Residents' Research Essay Contest**
With the support of Patriot Pharmaceutical

06 December 2003 (Saturday) – Day 3
0730-0800H HIGHLIGHTS
1. Stone Disease
Dr. Joel Patrick A. Aldana, Philippines
2. Pediatric Urology
Dr. Rico Y. Sampang, Philippines
0800-0830H STATE OF THE ART LECTURE 5
Chairman: Dr. Lester A. Garcia, Philippines
Laparoscopic Radical Prostatectomy
Lecturer: Dr. Xavier Cathelineau, France
0830-0930H POINT-COUNTERPOINT SESSION 1
Chairman: Jose Vicente T. Prodigalidad, Philippines
Renal Cell Carcinoma: Laparoscopic vs. Open Surgery
Panelists: Dr. Xavier Cathelineau, France
Dr. Sidney Kam Hung Yip, Singapore
Dr. Abelardo M. Prodigalidad, Philippines
0930-1000H FAUA LECTURE 2
Chairman: Dr. Doddy M. Soebadi, Indonesia
"Focusing on the Filipino Aging Male"
Lecturer: Dr. Jose Albert C. Reyes III, Philippines
1000-1030H FAUA LECTURE 3
Chairman: Dr. German Jose T. Albano, Philippines
"Severely Oligospermic Male"
Lecturer: Prof. Peter H.C. Lim, Singapore
1030-1100H Coffee Break
1100-1130H FAUA LECTURE 4
Chairman: Dr. Eduardo R. Gatchalian, Philippines
"Emerging Trends in the Management of Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia"
Lecturer: Prof. Foo Keong Tatt, Singapore
1130-1200H FAUA Lecture 5
Chairman: Dr. Jose Albert C. Reyes III, Philippines
"Asian School of Urology: Its Impact to the FAUA"
Lecturer: Dr. Rohan Malek, Malaysia
1200-1230H STATE OF THE ART LECTURE 6
Chairman: Dr. Michael Y. Leh, Philippines ***"Changing Concepts in LUTS Secondary to BPH"***
Lecturer: Prof. Frans M.J. Debruyne, Netherlands
1230-1400H INDUSTRY SPONSORED LUNCH SYMPOSIUM 3
With the support of Sanofi-Synthelabo Phils. Inc.
"All-One Study: Global & Asian Results"
Lecturer: Dr. Xavier Cathelineau, France
1400-1430H STATE OF THE ART LECTURE 7
Chairman: Dr. Jose Rizalito C. Catipay, Philippines
Surgical Management of Incontinence
Lecturer: Dr. Ananias C. Diokno, USA
1430-1530H PANEL DISCUSSION 4
Chairman: Dr. Marie Carmela M. Lapitan, Philippines
Co-Chair: Dr. David T. Consigliere, Singapore
Urodynamics: Basic and Advanced
Panelists: Dr. Ananias C. Diokno, USA
Dr. Shailesh Raina, India
Dr. Edgar U. Lim, Philippines
1530-1600H ***Conducting Research: What is the Investigator Sponsored Study?***
Speaker: Dr. Yunfeng Qin, China
1600-1800H FAUA Council Meeting (Basilan)
1600-1800H Podium Session I (Mactan I)
Podium Session II (Mactan II)
1800-2130H FAUA FELLOWSHIP NIGHT

07 December 2003 (Sunday)- Day 4
0730-0800H HIGHLIGHTS
1. Laparoscopy
Dr Jose Vicente T. Prodigalidad, Philippines
2. BPH/ Infertility
Dr German Jose T. Albano, Philippines
3. Incontinence/Urodynamics
Dr. Edgar U. Lim, Philippines
0800-0830H STATE OF THE ART LECTURE 8
Chairman: Dr. Reynaldo C. dela Cruz, Philippines
Hormone Refractory Prostate Cancer
Lecturer: Prof. Frans M.J. Debruyne, Netherlands
0830-0900H FAUA Lecture 6
Chairman: Dr. Pedro L. Lantin III, Philippines
"Prostate Brachytherapy in the Philippines"
Lecturer: Dr. Jason L. Letran, Philippines
0900-1000H PANEL DISCUSSION 5
Chairman: Dr. Jason L. Letran, Philippines
Co-Chair: Dr. Dennis P. Serrano, Philippines
Prostate Cancer Management Across All Stages
Panelists: Prof. Frans M.J. Debruyne, Netherlands
Dr. Christopher Cheng, Singapore
Dr. David A. Abraham, Philippines
Dr. Doddy M. Soebadi, Indonesia
1000-1030H FAUA Lecture 7
Chairman: Dr. Antonio L. Anastacio, Philippines
"Status of Urinary Diversion in Bladder Cancer Pts"
Lecturer: Dr. Rainy Umbas, Indonesia
1030-1100H Coffee Break
1100-1130H FAUA Lecture 8
Chairman: Dr Juliano Z.K. Panganiban, Philippines
"Localized Prostate Cancer in Asia"
Lecturer: Dr Jesus Benjamin L. Mendoza, Phils.
1130-1200H TAKE HOME MESSAGE
1. Endourology
Dr Dennis G. Lusaya, Philippines
2. Pediatric Urology
Dr Carlos Ramon N. Torres, Jr., Philippines
3. Incontinence / Urodynamics
Dr Marie Carmela M. Lapitan, Philippines
4. Urologic Oncology
Dr Jose Benito A. Abraham, Philippines
1200H Closing

For more details, please contact the 10th FAUA Secretariat
PUA Office - 4544439, 9256740 * Hotel - Basilan Room - 6338888

Advt.

GMA asks Congress to pass nat'l ID system law

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo has asked Congress to immediately pass the National Identification System Act despite strong opposition from militant groups.

National Security Adviser Roilo Golez said the proposed national ID system would help the Philippines combat terrorism and fraud.

The ID system would combat swindling, electoral fraud, and preventing a terrorist from getting into the country using false identity papers "and causing so much damage to our economy," Golez said on ABS-CBN television.

Golez said concerns that a national ID system would restrict civil liberties or be used to harass government critics were "overblown," saying those views were put forward by groups seeking to bring down the government through the use of arms.

However, it is not only militant groups that are up in arms against the proposed ID system which they claimed as "repressive."

Yesterday, former Sen. Raul Roco, a rival candidate of Ms Macapagal in the 2004 elections, said the proposed ID system would only victimize innocent Filipinos and give rise to massive corruption.

"The creation of a national ID system is a quick fix that would not deter terrorists and criminals, but instead would pose a threat to the rights, freedom and equality of Filipinos," Roco warned.

He noted that anybody, be they terrorists or criminals, will always be able to obtain, by legal or illegal means, the documents needed to get a government ID.

But Davao City Rep. Prospero Nograles defended the proposed ID system, saying this would help in the fight against crime and terrorism.

Nograles assured that Congress would put in place all the necessary safeguards to prevent abuse on every individual's basic human rights, including the right to privacy.

"There's no basis for the perceptions that the NIS can be a tool for abuse," he said.

Nograles said this would not only provide the government a quicker access on the profile of suspected criminals and terrorists but this would also expedite business and government transactions.

The congressman cited countries that have a national reference system similar to the proposed NIS.

In Brazil, for example, all residents were obliged to carry at all times a laminated flexible ID card bearing a photograph, thumb print, full name and parents' names, national status and a serial number.

The Germans have "Personalausweis," a plastic ID card which contains the name, date and place of birth, nationality, date of expiration, signature and photo of the bearer.

The Italians have a larger ID format containing identity number, name, photo, signature, fingerprints, date and place of birth, citizenship, residency, address, marital status, profession and physical characteristics.

The Department of Justice yesterday also hit critics of the national ID system, saying that only criminals and those who have something to hide from the law are against it.

"Having a single national ID system would be for the convenience of the people. There are many countries who have national IDs," said Justice Undersecretary Jose Calida.

Militant groups have warned that the national ID system would violate the people's human rights and civil liberties. They said they would go to the streets if the government proceeds with its plan to implement a national ID system.

In 1998, former President Fidel V. Ramos tried to push for a national ID system as part of the government's security and counter-insurgency measures. But it was shot down after the Supreme Court ruled that it posed a "clear and present danger" and would violate a person's right to privacy which is guaranteed and made "inviolable" by the Constitution. *AP, Philip C. Tubeza and Cynthia D. Balana*

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Son of Estrada pal . . .

From page A1

Lepeng, reported that he and his other security escort, who was not identified, escaped as the gunmen fired at Amante Kumay-ao, a retired Marine soldier.

But Supt. Mario Yanga, city police chief, said he was not convinced that it was a case of a foiled kidnapping "because the two others were not harmed."

Yanga said Wee's group and the armed men could have figured in a near vehicular accident.

The Wees refused to talk to local journalists.

"We recovered 13 spent shells at the crime scene," Yanga said. The shells had come from a .45-cal. pistol, a 9-mm pistol and an M-16 rifle, according to Chief Insp. Vicente Salvador, chief of the Sta. Maria police station.

Salvador said Richie had claimed he was driving along Maestra Vicenta Extension in Barangay Sta. Maria when he noticed two vehicles, a yellow Revo and a white multi-cab, tailing them.

The vehicles reportedly blocked their way and their five passengers ordered the teenager to alight, Richie told police.

Kumay-ao, who got down from the vehicle, was shot by the gunmen. He died from seven bullet wounds, Yanga said.

Immediately after the killing, Richie said he and his other guard escaped and reported the case to the police.

Richie's father had negotiated the release of three Malaysians who were among those kidnapped from a high-end resort in Sipadan, Malaysia, in 2000.

US troops repel attacks, kill 54 Iraqis

From page A1

ington on the risks of getting involved in the mission to stabilize and rebuild Iraq.

A US military spokesperson said Sunday's clash was initiated by attackers, many wearing uniforms of Saddam's Fedayeen paramilitary force, who simultaneously attacked two US convoys at opposite sides of Samarra, a town between Baghdad and Saddam's hometown of Tikrit.

Associated Press Television News images showed scenes of devastation, with buildings pockmarked by hundreds of bullet holes, and about two dozen badly damaged cars, apparently run over by armored vehicles. A bus abandoned in the middle of a street had its front sheared off. Fences and walls of several residential homes were destroyed, apparently by shelling.

"The 4th Infantry Division repelled multiple ambush attacks," Lt. Col. William MacDonald told reporters.

MacDonald said that after barricading a road, the attackers opened fire from rooftops and alleyways with bombs, small arms, mortars and rocket-propelled grenades. US troops responded with 120mm tank rounds and 25-mm cannon fire from Bradley fighting vehicles.

US fire destroyed three buildings the attackers were using, MacDonald said.

"It sounds like the attack had some coordination to it, but the soldiers responded, used their firepower, used tank and Bradley fire and other weapons available to them, to stop this attack and take the fight to the enemy," he said.

Largest attack

MacDonald said the attack was the largest faced by his Task Force Ironhorse, whose mission includes the hunt for Saddam. Military officials in Baghdad said they hadn't reported a deadlier attack since May 1, when US President George W. Bush declared major combat over.

The scale of the attack and the apparent coordination of the two operations showed that rebel units retain the ability to conduct synchronized operations despite a massive US offensive this month aimed at crushing the insurgency.

At least 104 coalition troops had died in Iraq in November, including 79 American and 19 Italian soldiers. In terms of coalition losses, it has been the bloodiest month of the war that began on March 20.

In Sunday's firefight in Samarra, the US military initially said 46 Iraqi fighters died and five American soldiers were wounded. Eighteen Iraqis were also reported wounded and eight were captured.

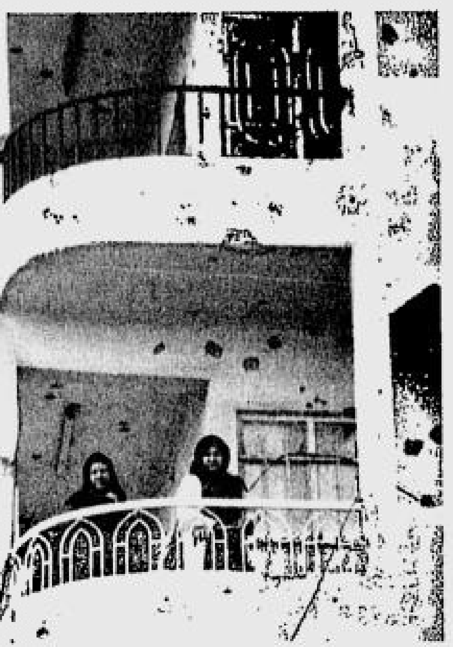
But a US military statement on Monday raised the Iraqi dead to 54 amid reports by Iraqi doctors that eight civilians were killed by US fire in the fiery exchanges.

Samarra residents also said most of those killed were ordinary townspeople who tried to flee the firefight.

"No one wants these Americans to enter this holy city. We don't want them to defile (it), and that's why this battle happened," said resident Mawlud Jassim. "Many Iraqis were killed and the Americans sustained big losses in lives and equipment."

Hossam Shaker, who had a shrapnel wound to his left arm, said a shell exploded among a group of workers walking out of the gate of the Samarra Pharmaceutical Plant at the end of the morning shift.

"American forces opened fire randomly on passersby and on (people) in the marketplace," said Shaker, who was interviewed on Monday at the town's general hospital.



TWO women stand in their bullet-riddled balcony after it was repeatedly hit during a US Army attack in Samarra. AFP

Shortly after the firefight, four men in a BMW attacked another US convoy in Samarra with automatic rifles, MacDonald said. The soldiers wounded all four men, and found Kalashnikov rifles and grenade launchers in their car.

"We have been very aggressive in our convoy operations … It does send a clear message that if you attempt to attack one of our convoys, we're going to use our firepower to stop that attack," MacDonald said.

New campaign

Also Sunday, two South Korean contractors were killed near Samarra in a roadside ambush in what US officials called a new campaign aimed at undermining international support for the US-led occupation of Iraq. Attacks on Saturday killed seven Spanish intelligence agents, two Japanese diplomats and a Colombian oil worker.

In Seoul, the South Korean government vowed Monday to stick by plans to send up to 3,000 troops to Iraq despite the killing of two South Korean engineers.

"This incident will not affect the question of sending troops to Iraq," Foreign Minister Yoon Young-kwan said Monday. "Our decision to send troops to Iraq remains unchanged."

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi reiterated Monday his vow that the attack on the Japanese diplomats would not alter Tokyo's commitments to send non-combat troops, provide humanitarian aid and participate in the reconstruction of Iraq.

"We must not give in to terrorism," Koizumi said.

In Spain, the coffins of the slain intelligence agents arrived home on Sunday, a day after the men were killed when guerrillas attacked their convoy south of Baghdad with assault rifles and rocket-propelled grenades.

The deaths rekindled deep-seated doubts about the role of Spanish troops in Iraq, but Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar—who disregarded public opinion to support the US invasion—said the country would not abandon its mission in Iraq. *Reports from AP and Reuters*

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Manay Gina eyes Senate seat

By Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

DAGUPAN CITY—Don't look now, but Gina de Venecia, the wife of Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr., may run for senator in the May national elections.

Mrs. De Venecia, 54, known as Manay Gina, said the leadership of the ruling Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats was encouraging her to join the party's senatorial slate because it "wanted somebody to represent the women and children in the Senate."

Will her husband allow her? "He's thinking about it. If it's good for the people and I can be of help, why won't he allow me?" she said.

The Speaker, who happens to be the co-chair of Lakas, smiled and put his hands up when asked about the candidacy of his wife. "Is she keen on running?" he asked.

Mrs. De Venecia said she would also be counting on the support of the women she has helped, her fans, her friends in the movie industry and the Lakas machinery.

She is the president of the Congressional Spouses Foundation Inc., which has established shelters for abused women and children. The group has also established shelters for street children in different parts of the country.

Mrs. De Venecia said she would be counting on the support of members of the movie industry, "which is part of my family." The Vera Perez family owns Sampaguita Pictures, which made movie stars like Susan Roces, Rosemarie Sonora and Amalia Fuentes.

Mrs. De Venecia is the younger sister of Marichu Vera Perez, former wife of former Sen. Ernesto Maceda.

She admitted that she had no experience in politics, but her background in public service and politics would be enough.

She said her father, known as Doc Perez, had inculcated in his children the value of helping the poor.

Being married to the Speaker got her involved in politics, she said. Whatever political lessons she has not learned, she said, "he can teach me."

Mrs. De Venecia, who traces her roots to Bicol and Bulacan and whose husband is from vote-rich Pangasinan, said she would announce her decision on Jan. 2.

Noli, Loren lead VP race, poll shows

From page A1

percent; Sen. Juan Flavier, 7 percent; Sen. Vicente Sotto III, 6 percent; and Metro Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando, 5 percent.

Senators Robert Barbers, Aquilino "Nene" Pimentel Jr. and Ramon Magsaysay Jr. each got 3 percent; Vice President Teofisto Guingona Jr. and Roxas, 2 percent, and former Cebu Gov. Emilio "Lito" Osmeña, one percent.

Only one percent of the respondents were undecided.

"While Filipinos give strong support to De Castro for both the presidential and vice presidential positions, he stands a better chance in the VP race where he takes the lead even as he has not announced that he will indeed run for VP," Pulse Asia executive director Ana Maria Tabunda said in a statement.

Pulse Asia said that De Castro's strongest support came from the poorest Class E (47 percent) and that he was relatively weak among Metro Manilans (29 percent) and the upper Classes ABC (21 percent).

In contrast, Legarda had a good showing among Metro Manilans (30 percent) but was weak among the Class E (16 percent).

De Castro is being wooed by President Macapagal-Arroyo to be her running mate, although he has not declared an interest in the post.

Legarda said she was running for the second top post when she bolted the administration party. She is reportedly being considered by actor Fernando Poe Jr. to be his running mate.

Barbers and Fernando have also declared their interest in the vice presidency.

"While De Castro tends to be picked as the first-choice candidate in the VP race, Legarda gets most of the second-choice votes," Tabunda noted.

Twenty-six percent of the respondents said they would vote for Legarda if their first choice would not run; 19 percent would go for De Castro; 10 percent for Sotto; 9 percent for Flavier, and 7 percent for Drilon.

Korina Sanchez

Out of 57 pre-selected personalities, the respondents were asked to name the 12 they would vote for for senator. Eighteen got at least 23 percent of the votes, enough to be within striking distance of the "Magic 12."

Legarda ranked first with 66.2 percent; followed by former Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, 41.3 percent; Revilla Jr., 36.3 percent; Pimentel, 34.5 percent; Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, 34.2 percent; former Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim, 33.6 percent; Barbers, 32.9 percent; Foreign Secretary Blas Ople, 30.2 percent; ABS-CBN news reader Korina Sanchez, 29.3 percent; Sen. Robert Jaworski, 27.8 percent;

Guingona, 27.1 percent; Sen. John Osmeña, 26.8 percent; former San Juan Mayor Jinggoy Estrada, 26.4 percent; Roxas, 26.2 percent; Ilocos Norte Rep. Imee Marcos, 25.2 percent; former Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, 24.7 percent; former Sen. Orlando Mercado, 24.2 percent, and Gordon, 23.8 percent.

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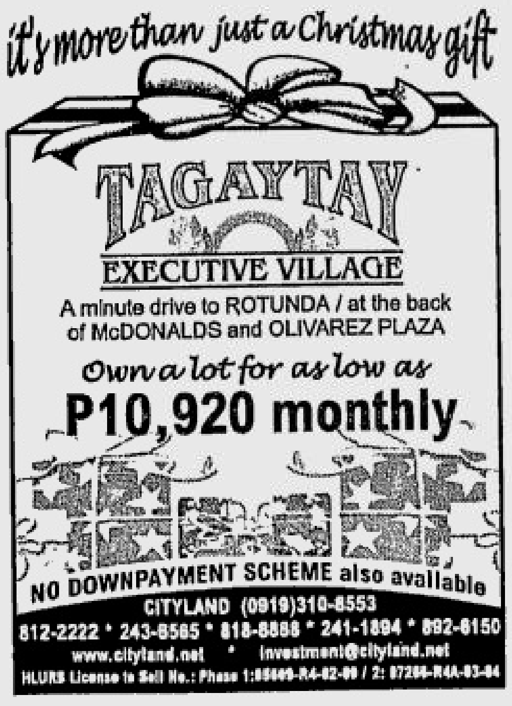
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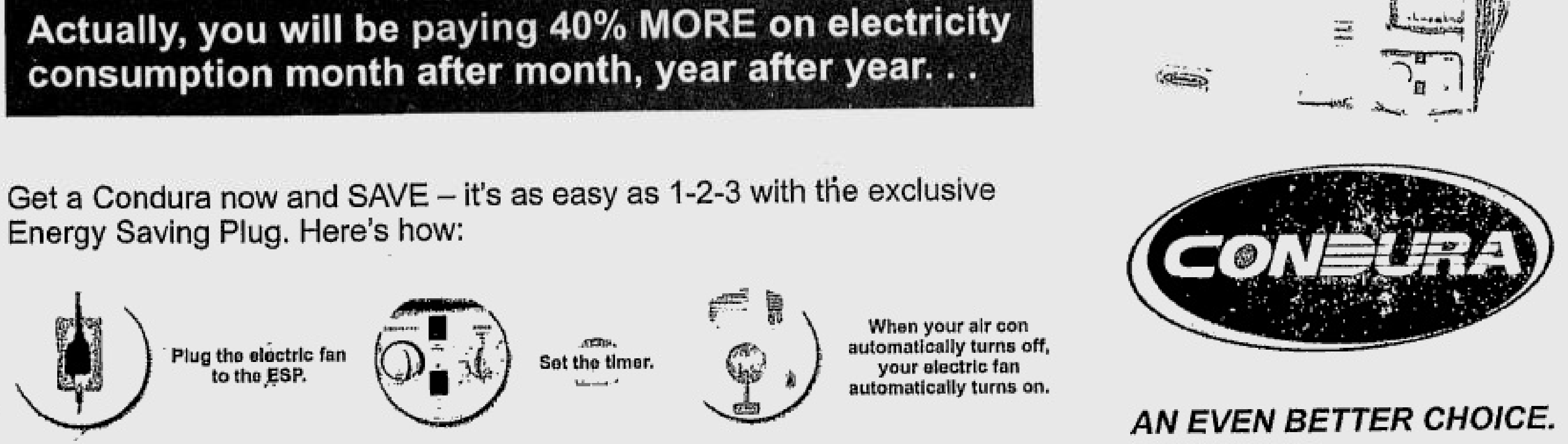

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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Seoul, Tokyo undeterred by Iraq deaths

TOKYO/SEOUL—Japan and South Korea voiced determination on Monday to proceed with sending troops to Iraq despite weekend killings of several of their nationals there and popular doubts about taking part in the operation.

Neither of the two North Asian nations plans to send large numbers of soldiers or to take part in combat operations, but their participation marks an important step for the US-led coalition forces in persuading more countries to join.

Two Japanese diplomats were killed in an ambush on Saturday en route to a reconstruction conference in the northern town of Tikrit while two South Korean electrical workers died in a shooting also near the city that is the hometown of deposed president Saddam Hussein.

They were among a dozen people from four US-allied nations killed in weekend attacks, sparking new concern among Washington's allies about the risks of getting involved in Iraq.

"There is no change in our stance," said Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, reelected last month but who must balance the demands of security ties with the United States with the concerns of voters before Upper House elections in July.

"We must not be daunted by the intention of terrorists to halt the reconstruction effort and cause confusion," he said.

He gave no clue as to when troops might be sent.

South Korea would go ahead with plans to deploy more troops in Iraq despite the shooting of four South Korean civilians on Sunday, Foreign Minister Yoon Young-kwan told a briefing.

"The issue of the troop deployment plan to Iraq will not be affected and there is no change to our original plan," said Yoon, who is a member of South Korea's National Security Council and attended an emergency session earlier.

He said it was still not clear whether the South Korean victims—two killed and two wounded—had been specifically targeted because of Seoul's support for the US-led force in Iraq.

"Despite the tragic incident, we will not yield to violence or killings," the foreign ministry said. "We will continue to participate in humanitarian aid to Iraq and reconstruction efforts."

South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun condemned the shootings. *Reuters*

1 AIDS death every minute in Asia—WHO

MANILA—AIDS now kills a person every minute in the Asia Pacific, the World Health Organization said Monday, warning HIV prevalence is increasing in China, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Vietnam.

The Manila-based WHO regional office for the Western Pacific said in a statement in conjunction with World AIDS Day that more than half a million people in the Asia Pacific died of the disease in 2003.

"That is one death from AIDS every minute," it said, warning that "without major investments in prevention and care, similar annual death tolls can be expected until the end of the decade."

New WHO studies showed that more than seven million people were living with HIV/AIDS in Asia and the Pacific, out of the global total of 40 million.

India had the highest number of people in Asia living with HIV/AIDS—an estimated 3.8 million to 4.6 million people. *AFP*

CLASSICAL DANCE
Indian dancers practice the ancient Odissi dance during the Konark Dance Festival, 70 km from the city of Bhubaneshwar, capital of the eastern Indian state of Orissa on Dec. 1. The five-day festival invites many different types of classical dancers from across India to perform traditional dances. REUTERS

US to release 140 prisoners from Guantanamo

WASHINGTON—The United States has plans to release scores of prisoners at its Guantanamo Bay naval base in Cuba for al-Qaida and Taliban detainees, according to reports Sunday.

A US military officials told Time magazine that it would release 140 inmates from its detention center in Cuba, in the face of mounting international criticism of the legal limbo that has left them without access to legal representation.

A US military official told the magazine that the detainees slated for release are "the easiest 20 percent" of the estimated 660 people kept at Guantanamo Bay, which the United States has leased from Cuba since 1903.

US officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that some of the detainees had been captured by Afghan warlords and sold for the bounty offered by Washington for al-Qaida and Taliban fighters.

"Many would not have been detained under the normal rules of engagement," the source told the weekly.

"We're dealing with some very, very dangerous people, but the pendulum is swinging too far in the wrong direction."

Twenty prisoners were released and repatriated on Nov. 21, but another 20 arrived around the same time, leaving the total number of inmates unchanged. *AFP*

9th ASEAN Federation for Psychiatry and Mental Health Congress and the 13th ASEAN FORUM on Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

WATERFRONT Cebu City Hotel,
Lahug, Cebu City, **Philippines**
December 3-6, 2003

MESSAGES

I commend the men and women of the ASEAN Federation for Psychiatric and Mental Health (AFPMH) for spearheading this *9th AFPMH Congress and 13th ASEAN Forum for Child and Psychiatry (AFCAP)* which provides a venue to discuss crucial issues on mental health care.

This even with the theme: *"Forum Margin to Mainstream,"* reminds all of us of the important role that you play in shaping our nation's future. It bolsters our efforts to make the Philippine healthcare system more effective and responsive to the demands of the 21st century.

Quality of health is a crucial factor in attaining sustainable development and in winning the war against poverty. I encourage doctors and other experts in the medical field to work hand in hand to help our people live healthy and productive lives. I wish for the success of this event. I am confident it will result in the adoption of innovative medical techniques to attain a world-class Philippine healthcare system.

MABUHAY!

GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO
President of the Republic of the Philippines

I would like to convey my warmest felicitations to the participants of the 9th Congress of the ASEAN Federation for Psychiatry and Mental Health (AFPMH) and the 13th ASEAN Forum for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AFCAP).

In recent times, we have witnessed a clear movement towards the convergence of individuals, groups and institutions in order to consolidate expertise, resources and know-how in dealing with many of the health issues and concerns which are best resolved using this collaborative approach. This is evident in the design and implementation of many of our national health programs which have achieved remarkable levels of accomplishment.

In the field of mental health, physicians, must be equipped with the necessary skills and competence through scientific forums, trainings, and seminars in order to reduce the prevalence of mental health illnesses. May this serve as an opportunity for you to share your expertise and experience with various colleagues and also to provide solutions to lessen the occurence of mental health problems among our people. Conducting this forum attests to your organization's commitment to promote high standards of excellence in psychiatry and mental health.

The Department of Health fully supports initiatives from professional societies that would enhance the training of our health professionals in order to ensure the delivery of quality health services to our people. This likewise highlights your dedication to advance your craft in collaboration with other key players of the health sector

Congratulations and Mabuhay kayong lahat!

MANUEL M. DAYRIT MD, MSc
Secretary of Health

On behalf of the Officers and the Board of Governors of the Philippine Medical Association, we convey sincerest greetings to the officers and members of the Philippine Psychiatric Association on the occasion of the 9th Congress of the ASEAN Federation for Psychiatric and Mental Health and the 13th ASEAN Forum for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.

We are grateful for being a part of this auspicious event and happily join you in greeting and welcoming all participants and delegates to this important forum. Considering the incidence of psychiatric disorders among the youth of the country, especially in depressed communities, we applaud your initiative in harnessing your optimum capabilities to stem the upsurge of mental illnesses through your continuing medical education program. It is only right that you pursue professional excellence and keep abreast with the fast changing times to help address not only psychiatric maladies but also societal concerns. For sure this confab shall be an unparalleled success.

Thank you for your professional efforts in giving substance to the PMA theme, *"A Unified and Responsive PMA into the Next Century,"* to underscore the PMA role in healthcare delivery and in nation building.

Congratulations. Mabuhay ang Philippine Psychiatric Association.

JOSE T. SANCHEZ, M.D.
President

My warmest congratulations and a warm welcome to the participating delegates to the ASEAN Federation for Psychiatry and Mental Health on the occasion of their joint 9th Congress of the ASEAN Federation and the 13th ASEAN Forum for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry which will be held on December 3-6, 2003 in Cebu City.

The Province of Cebu sincerely shares the organization's visions and objectives in facing the challenges of these rapidly changing societies. "Forum Margin to Mainstream", as the organization aptly describes the states of psychiatry and mental health in the ASEAN region, so do the practitioners in this field should be moving towards the mainstream and be ready to cope with the increasing demand for psychiatric and mental health.

With the experts and the best psychiatrists and mental health professionals sharing their knowledge and expertise in this field during this joint Congress, and a strong commitment by the respective member countries, much can be accomplished and realized.

Cebu stands proud for hosting this significant Congress.

Mabuhay! Cebu Capitol, Cebu City, October 6, 2003.

PABLO P. GARCIA
Governor

MESSAGES

I congratulate the *Philippine Psychiatric Association* for hosting the *ASEAN Federation of Psychiatry and Mental Health Congress* for the first time in Cebu City on December 3-6, 2003

It is truly an honor for the City of Cebu to be chosen as your venue for this very significant assembly. In behalf therefore of the Cebuano community, I would like to warmly welcome all delegates to the above Congress.

Your chosen theme, *"Mental Health Issues: From Margin to Mainstream"*, is surely on the right direction. I support your organization's pursuit for professionalism and competence in your industry.

I wish you a very productive assembly!

TOMAS R. OSMEÑA
Mayor

It gives me much pleasure to welcome you to the *9th Congress of the ASEAN Federation for Psychiatry and Mental Health (AFPMH) and the 13th ASEAN forum for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AFCAP)* being held in Cebu City, the Republic of the Philippines on *December 3-6, 2003.*

The Congress and Forum, held jointly as one Congress every two years on a rotating basis among the ASEAN countries, bring together the best psychiatrists and mental health professionals in the region. With invited eminent lecturers and participants from the other regions of the world, they share knowledge and experiences as they face the challenges in these rapidly changing societies.

The theme of the Congress - *"From Margin to Mainstream"* - aptly expresses the states of Psychiatry and mental health in the region. From the fringes of health care delivery system, our practitioners in the field are moving towards the mainstream. In the clinical, educational, and research activities, they reflect a deepening appreciation for the biological, psychological, and social basis of health and illness. Most of our member nations have to contend with rapidly changing socioeconomic orders, political leadership, internal displacement of people, acts of terrorism, natural and political leadership, internal displacement of people, acts of terrorism, natural and man-made disasters, poverty with all the social ills it brings about, including substance abuse of almost epidemic proportions, and the emerging values that compete with traditional ones. As our people learn to cope with an ever-changing world, the demand for psychiatric and mental health care has visibly increased.

The Congress gives us, the practitioners, researchers, and educators of our region - an opportunity to interact with one another and with colleagues from other lands. Let us grab this opportunity fully.

WELCOME TO ALL!

CORNELIO G. BANAAG, JR., M.D., FPPA, FCAPPI
President
ASEAN Federation for Psychiatry and Mental Health

This Pilipino term embodies what we in the Philippine Psychiatric Association, Inc. (PPA) wish to convey to all the participants and guests of the 9th ASEAN Federation of Psychiatry and Mental Health (AFPMH) Congress and the 13th ASEAN Forum on Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, that is, *welcome, long live and thank you!*

It is my heartfelt honor and pride to welcome all of you to this biennial meeting of ASEAN Psychiatrists and Mental Health professionals here in the beautiful city of Cebu. We wish that this affair will not only be intellectually productive but will be socially and culturally refreshing, as well. Aside from a wide-ranging array of significant and interesting topics on psychiatry and mental health, various activities like cultural night and tours were also lined up for your enjoyment.

Lastly, let me thank you for taking time out from your busy schedules to be with us on this momentous affair. Likewise, in behalf of the PPA, let me express our gratitude and congratulations to the AFPMH officers and organizing committee.

Mabuhay!

JOCELYN NIEVA YATCO-BAUTISTA, MD, FPPA, FCAPPI
President
Philippine Psychiatric Association, Inc.

Dear Colleagues,

It gives me much pleasure to welcome you all to the 9th Congress of the Asian Federation for Mental Health and the 13th Forum for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry to the historical and tranquil city of Cebu, also known as the Queen City of the South. This biennial event was originally scheduled for July 16-19, 2003; but to some circumstances beyond everyone's control the Organizing Committee decided to move it on December 3-6, 2003. The setback had turned the event into a more meaningful one - the month of December with its cool breezy climate, the festive ambience of the city, the warmth and congeniality of the Filipino's at their best. More importantly we project trends and paradigm shifts in the understanding of mental illnesses since our last congress in March, 2001 in Singapore. The Scientific Committee of this year's event had prepared a program that is balanced in substance and form to address issues on mental health across the life span.

Welcome my friends, and experience our gentleness and friendliness as a people. We may not be able to give you the best, but surely we will try to make this biennial event one of the best; if not, the best.

BERNARDO L. CONDE, MD, FPPA, FPNA
Vice President
and Over-all Chairperson A FPMH

Together with the psychiatrists from Cebu City, we welcome with distinct honor and pride to the historic queen city of the South of the Philippines all of the delegates to the 9th Congress of the ASEAN Federation for Psychiatry & Mental Health and 13th ASEAN Forum on Child & Adolescent Psychiatry.

It is our hope that this biennial event will be a far-reaching opportunity for psychiatrists and workers in the mental health profession of the ASEAN region to rekindle ties, to exchange professional ideas, expertise and updates. May the event be a vehicle for us to revisit and to be reminded once more of the influences of our unique Asean culture and heritage in the field of behavioral science.

We look forward to the renewed commitment of each and every ASEAN nation members for a stronger professional camaraderie among one and all.

More power to all.
Mabuhay!

Pureza Trinidad Oñate M.D.
PUREZA TRINIDAD OÑATE, M.D., FPPA, FCAPPI
Co-Chairperson A AFPMH

PROGRAMME
at a GLANCE

3 DECEMBER 2003 (Wednesday)

7:00 AM	Arrival and Registration
10:00 AM	AFPMH Business Meeting
3:00 PM	Opening Ceremonies
Presidential Address:	CORNELIO G. BANAAG JR., MD.
Emcees:	MA. LUZ C. QUERUBIN, MD EDGARDO L. TOLENTINO, MD
5:00 PM	Country Report
7:00 PM	Welcome Reception and Dinner
Emcees:	MA. MONICA C. TAN, MD BENJAMIN D. VISTA, MD
9:00 PM	Tribute to AFPMH Past Presidents

4 DECEMBER 2003 (Thursday)

8:30 AM	Mind-Brain Interaction: From Receptor to Reintegration
Speaker:	VICENTE G. ROSALES JR., MD (PHIL)
9:30 AM	Assessment and Management of Cognitive Problems in Dementia
Speaker:	CHRISTOPHER CHEN, MD (SIN)
11:00 AM	Psychosis and Depression in Late Life
Speaker:	PUREZA T. OÑATE, MD (PHIL)
12.00 NN	Astrazeneca Lunch Symposium
Speaker:	DOUGLAS KONG, MD (SIN)
2:00 PM	Addiction Psychiatry: Prevention and Treatment Guidelines in Addictive States
Speakers:	KEN WINTERS, MD (USA) MUNIDASA WINSLOW, MD (SIN) EDGARDO L. TOLENTINO, MD (PHIL)
4:00 PM	Agony of Mental Disorders Across the ASEAN
Speaker:	LOURDES L. IGNACIO, MD (PHIL)
5:00 PM	Open Forum
5:30 PM	Eli Lilly Dinner Symposium: Switching Antipsychotics to Maximize Quality of Life
Speaker:	TIM LAMBERT, MD (AUS)
7:00 PM	Fellowship Night
Emcees:	FELICITAS A. SORIANO, MD ROBERT D. BUENAVENTURA, MD

5 DECEMBER 2003 (Friday)

8:00 AM	Effects of TV and Cyberspace on the Minds of Children and Adolescents
Speaker:	ADORACION L. TAÑEGA, MD (PHIL)
	The Child Psychiatrists in Court: The Birth of Forensic Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
Speaker:	NORIETA C. BALDERRAMA, MD (PHIL)
	Resiliency and Human Development
Speaker:	CORNELIO G. BANAAG JR., MD (PHIL)
10:00 AM	Organon Symposium: New Directions in the Development of Antidepressants: Focus on the HPA Axis
Speaker:	GREGOR LAAKMANN, MD (GER)
	The Faster Onset of Action of Mirtazapine Compared to SSRIs: Meta-analysis of Over 2,900 Patients
Speaker:	CHANG YOON KIM, MD, PhD (KOREA)
11:00 AM	Free Papers
12:00 NN	Janssen Lunch Symposium: Road to Remission
Speaker:	BERNARDO L. CONDE, MD (PHIL)
2:00 PM	ADHD in Children: Recognition and Management
Speakers:	JOHN BRENNAN, MD (AUS) MA. CYNTHIA R. LEYNES (PHIL)
3:30 PM	Pharmacologic Treatment of Aggression in Psychotic States
Speaker:	TIM LAMBERT, MD (AUS)
4:30 PM	Psychotherapy in Diverse Cultures
Speakers:	EDVARD HAUFF, MD (NORWAY) BALTAZAR V. REYES, MD (PHIL) DOUGLAS KONG, MD (SIN)
6:30 PM	Novartis Dinner Symposium: Reducing Suicide in Schizophrenia and Bipolar Disorder – Treatment and Suicide Risk
Speaker:	PAUL V. LEE, MD (PHIL)

6 DECEMBER 2003 (Saturday)

8:30 AM	Psychiatry and the Human Genome Project
Speaker:	GREGORY PASTORES, MD (USA)
9:30 AM	Mental Health Issues Among Migrant Workers
Speaker:	MARLA ASIS, PhD (PHIL)
10:30 AM	Implication of Gender Violence and Other Gender Issues on Mental Health
Speaker:	CAROLYN I. SOBRITCHEA, PhD (PHIL)
11:30 AM	Open Forum
12:00 NN	Pfizer Lunch Symposium: The Faces of Zeldox
Speaker:	SONIA C. RODRIGUEZ, MD (PHIL)
2:00 PM	Life on the Run – A Psychosocial Needs Assessment in Pikit, North Cotabato
Speaker:	JUNE CARIDAD P. LOPEZ, MD (PHIL)
3:00 PM	ASEAN Psychiatry Education
Speakers:	ALBERT MARAMIS, MD (IND) SONIA C. RODRIGUEZ, MD (PHIL) PICHET UDOMRATN, MD (THAI)
5:00 PM	Hi-Eisai Dinner Symposium: The Use of Cholinesterase Inhibitors for Neuropsychiatric Symptoms of Dementia
Speaker:	SIMEON M. MARASIGAN, MD (PHIL)
7:00 PM	Closing Ceremonies

Private Mideast peace effort to be launched

GENEVA—Prominent Palestinians and Israeli opposition politicians are due to launch a private Middle East peace effort dubbed the Geneva Initiative on Monday, shunning powerful opposition to their bid.

The initiative contains a detailed blueprint to resolve some of the toughest issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but has met outright rejection from the Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and half-hearted support from the Palestinian Authority.

It is being formally unveiled in the western Swiss city as the internationally backed "roadmap" for peace has floundered amid continuing violence and Israel's building of a security barrier through the occupied West Bank.

The Israeli government has sharply criticized the instigators for bypassing official channels and has reiterated that the bid will harm the roadmap.

Israel warned the international community not to be coaxed into supporting the initiative, which has no official backing although it has drawn European support and encouragement from Washington.

Washington's top envoy William Burns met senior Israeli officials Sunday, amid a sudden flurry of diplomatic activity.

The Geneva Initiative's renunciation to the automatic right of return of 3.8 million Palestinian refugees has earned it staunch opposition from Palestinian factions.

On Sunday, about 300 militants from an umbrella group representing Palestinian factions, including Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Palestinian president Yasser Arafat's mainstream Fatah party, blocked a Palestinian delegation heading to Geneva from the Gaza Strip.

The principal architects of the Geneva blueprint include former Israeli justice minister Yossi Beilin and ex-Palestinian information minister and Arafat confidant Yasser Abed Rabbo, who say it complements the official roadmap.

Their 50-page document, details the creation of a Palestinian state encompassing 97.5 percent of the West Bank with shared sovereignty over Jerusalem.

The launch of the bid in Geneva is due to be attended by about 700 guests, including many intellectuals and celebrities from both sides of the divide, as well as former US President Jimmy Carter, who helped broker the Camp David accords that led to the 1979 peace treaty between Israel and Egypt. *AFP*

Pakistan agrees to resume air connections with India

ISLAMABAD—Pakistan President Pervez Musharaff Sunday said his country will agree to resume air links with India at forthcoming talks in New Delhi, the latest sign of thawing relations between the nuclear rivals.

In a speech at a youth conference, Musharraf said Pakistan would make the agreement at the two-day talks as a gesture of goodwill at a time when both countries appear to be taking significant steps to reverse a major standoff.

"Pakistan is sincere in its efforts for peace in the region," Musharraf said, according to the state-run Associated Press of Pakistan.

"In the meeting which is taking place tomorrow and day after in New Delhi, we will agree and we will resume all flights."

The move, which comes shortly after both countries declared a ceasefire along their borders in the disputed region of Kashmir, was hailed by New Delhi, which has been particularly keen to gain overflight rights to Afghanistan.

"We welcome the announcement by President Musharraf that Pakistan will agree to overflights," external affairs ministry spokesperson Navtej Sarna said, according to a Press Trust of India report.

"We are looking forward to a successful outcome of the talks tomorrow (Monday) and the day after." Talks between aviation officials from Pakistan and India held in August in the Pakistani city of Rawalpindi ended inconclusively.

The two countries severed air links after a December 2001 attack on India's parliament blamed by New Delhi on Pakistan-backed Kashmir separatists. More than one million troops were deployed by both countries along their mutual borders following the incident. *AFP*

ENGLISH CHANNEL CROSSER
Swimmer Gertrude Ederle is pictured at a beach on Long Island, N.Y., in this 1923 file photo. Ederle, who was the toast of America and Europe in 1926 when she became the first woman to swim the English Channel, died Nov. 30. She was 97. AP

Syria hands over to Turkey 22 bombing suspects

ANKARA—Syria has handed over to Turkey 22 people suspected of involvement in deadly suicide attacks in Istanbul, Anatolian news agency reported on Sunday, a day after another suspect was charged with seeking to topple the state.

The suspects fled Turkey after the November bombings in which 61 people died, the state-run agency said, quoting a statement from the Ankara security services.

Several of those detained were believed to have links with Azad Ekinci, who investigators suspect was a key planner of the attacks, the agency added. Ekinci is believed to have escaped from Turkey.

Turkey has so far charged 21 people on various counts in connection with the attacks on two Istanbul synagogues in which 29 people died on Nov. 15 and the offices of British-based bank HSBC and the British consulate in which 32 people died five days later.

Authorities Saturday charged an unnamed man with seeking to overthrow Turkey's constitutional order by force, which carries a life sentence on conviction. They accused him of ordering the bombing of the Beth Israel synagogue before trying to flee to Iran.

Police have named 29-year-old Mesut Cabuk as the man who actually blew himself up in carrying out the Beth Israel attack.

Istanbul's city governor Muammer Guler told a news conference in Istanbul on Sunday police had also identified a man they believed to be the suicide bomber in the attack on the HSBC bank building.

Guler said Turkish security services had not yet established whether Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network was involved in the attacks.

A number of suspects had fled to Syria, with which Turkey has had turbulent diplomatic relations in recent years. *Reuters*

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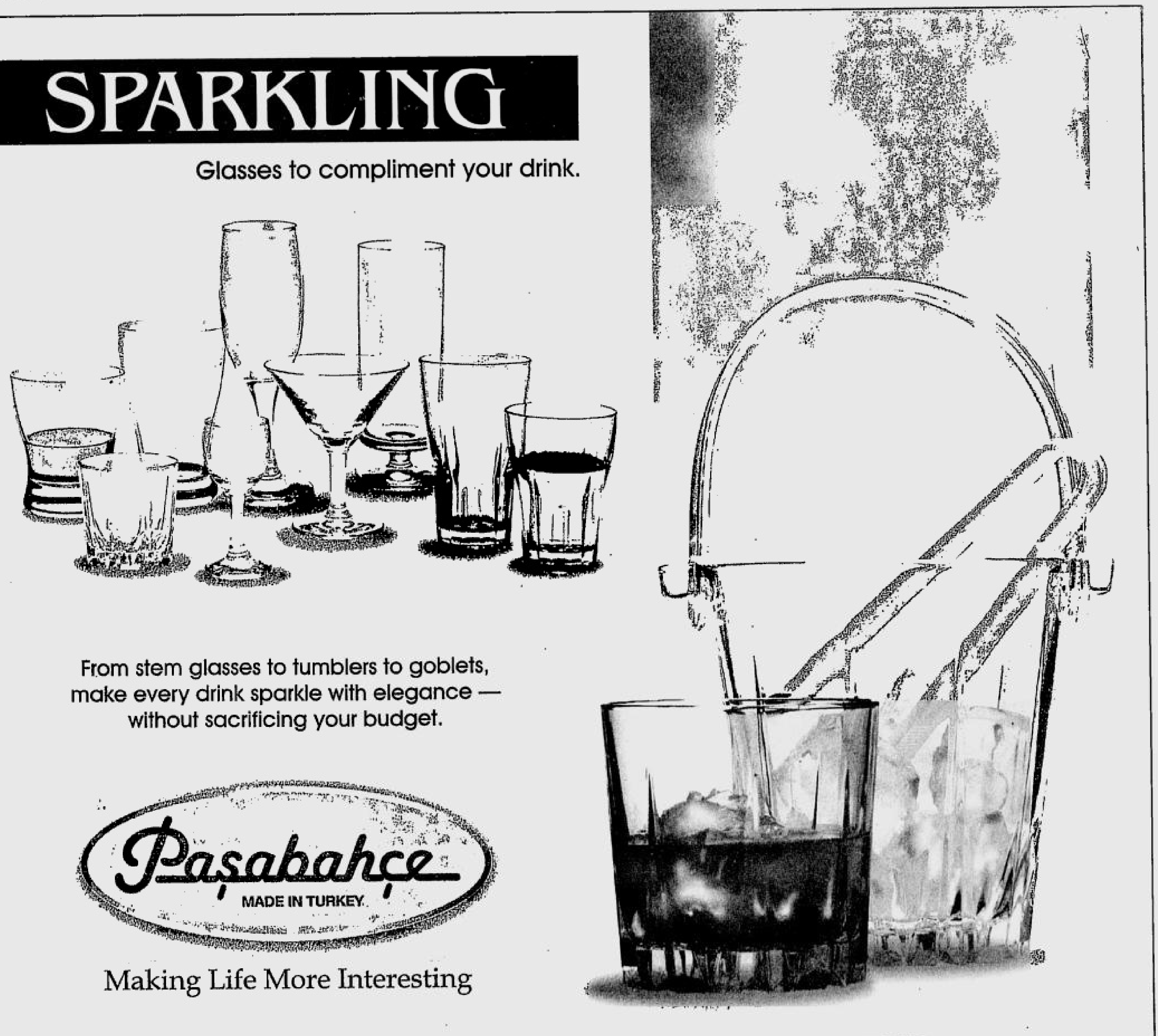

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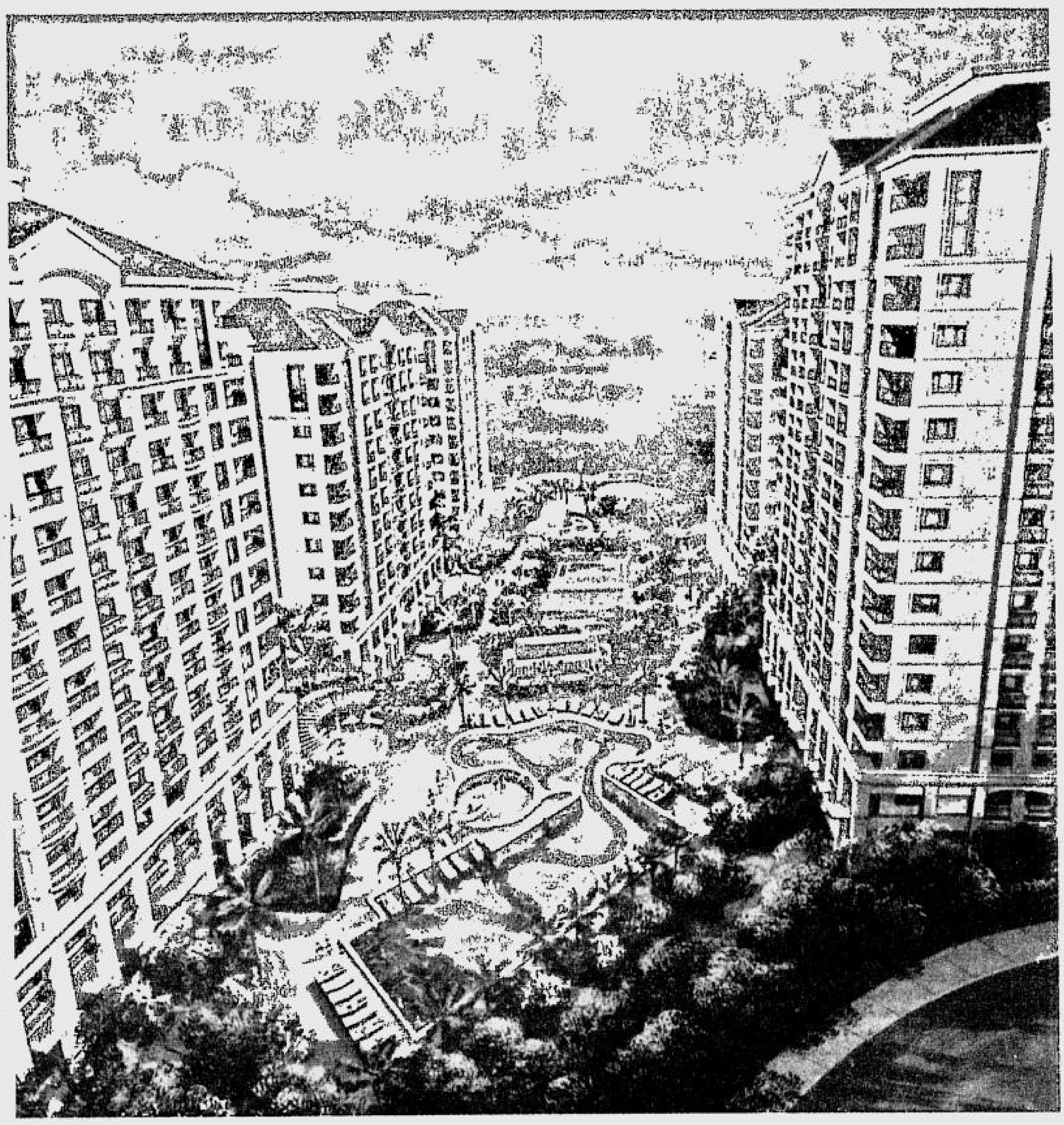
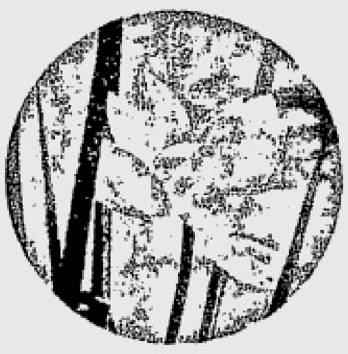


Forbeswood Heights
Your very own Paradise...

Emerging as one of the most coveted pieces of real estate in the country, Forbeswood Heights transforms home into a tropical getaway. Offering a paradise-like setting in the middle of the metropolis, this six-tower enclave achieves comfort and style through a balance of thoughtfully planned elements. For urban professionals based in the nearby Makati and even Ortigas central business districts, Forbeswood Heights offers exquisite residences combined with first-rate recreational amenities.



At Forbeswood Heights, today's urban pacesetters reward themselves with exclusive access to their own tropical paradise. This condominium project brings the outdoors indoors with its 5,500-square-meter central park, an extensive recreational area embraced by lush greenery. There is a swimming pool complex with a 25-meter-long lap pool, a free-form pool with in-water lounge and a children's wading pool with water slide. By the pool deck is an inviting sunbathing lounge.

From executive studios to one-bedroom suites that range from 36 to 59 square meters, Forbeswood Heights redefines the concept of owning a luxury home. Units can be joined to suit a client's space requirements. Rooms are airy and bright. The layout is luxurious yet uncomplicated. And with its affordable prices and flexible payment terms, one easily lays claim to an address and a lifestyle of exceptional prestige.

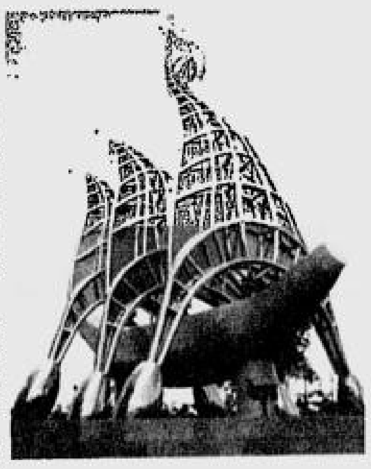
A multipurpose hall with a barbecue pit hosts a variety of functions. A fitness station, jogging path, tennis court and putting green provide challenging workouts. A playground enfolded by palm trees and landscaped gardens allows children to frolic to their hearts' content.

Beyond the gates lies Forbes Town Road, a leisure strip that echoes Singapore's Bugis Junction. With rows of cafés, restaurants, bars and specialty shops a few paces away, everyday celebrations are just waiting to happen.

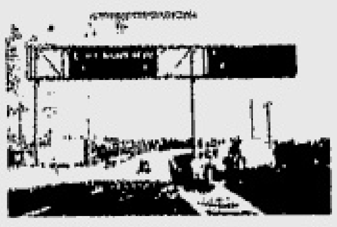
...Nestled amid the best of a Global City

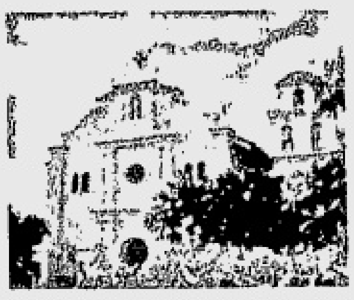
Forbeswood Heights lies within the Global City, a world-class business district, and is located right next to the country's foremost symbols of distinction: the Manila Golf and Country Club, the Manila Polo Club and the Forbes Park subdivision. This illustrious neighborhood, one of the city's main attractions, allows residents to live at the height of prominence.

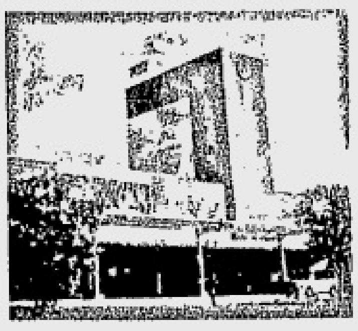
Nearly half of the Global City's land is devoted to open space and greenery. Urban professionals, used to the sight of skyscrapers and cramped roads, will find this place a refreshing change. Also dotting this city of green are striking works of public art created by top Filipino artists such as Gerry Leonardo and Ben-Hur Villanueva.



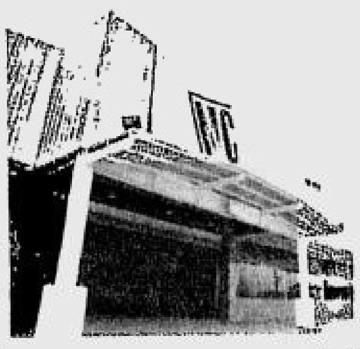
Much of the Global City's infrastructure has been laid underground. Its world-class dual piping, power and LPG supply and fiber optic cabling systems ensure the utmost convenience for its residents. Its drainage detention center, the largest private drainage structure in Metro Manila, guarantees that the city remains flood-free during the rainy season.

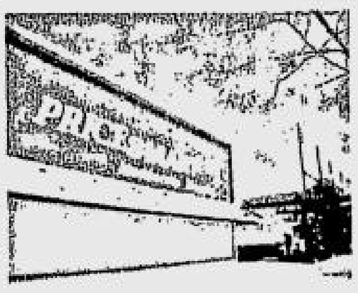






Well-situated amenities within the city such as PriceSmart and MC Home Depot make the daily essentials readily available to residents. The British School Manila, the Manila Japanese School and the International School Manila offer the youth a privileged education. The upcoming St. Luke's Medical Center brings expert health care closer to home.





With the Global City's mass transport system, efficient road network and state-of-the-art traffic services, key destinations become easily accessible. The Makati and Ortigas CBDs can be reached effortlessly via the EDSA Kalayaan Flyover, the South Luzon Expressway and the Circumferential Road (C-5).

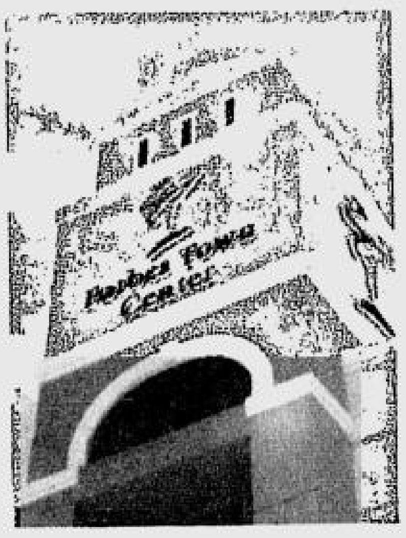
Transforming the Urban Landscape

Forbeswood Heights has captured the imagination of urban professionals doing business or working in Makati and Ortigas. With its tropical-paradise allure and the modern conveniences afforded by its vantage location in the Global City, touted as the next most important CBD, the project promises a superior standard of living for its residents. To date, Forbeswood Heights has joined Megaworld's portfolio of fast-selling projects, with the Agoho, Bauhinia, Cambridge and Dorchester towers already sold out and Evergreen 60 percent sold.

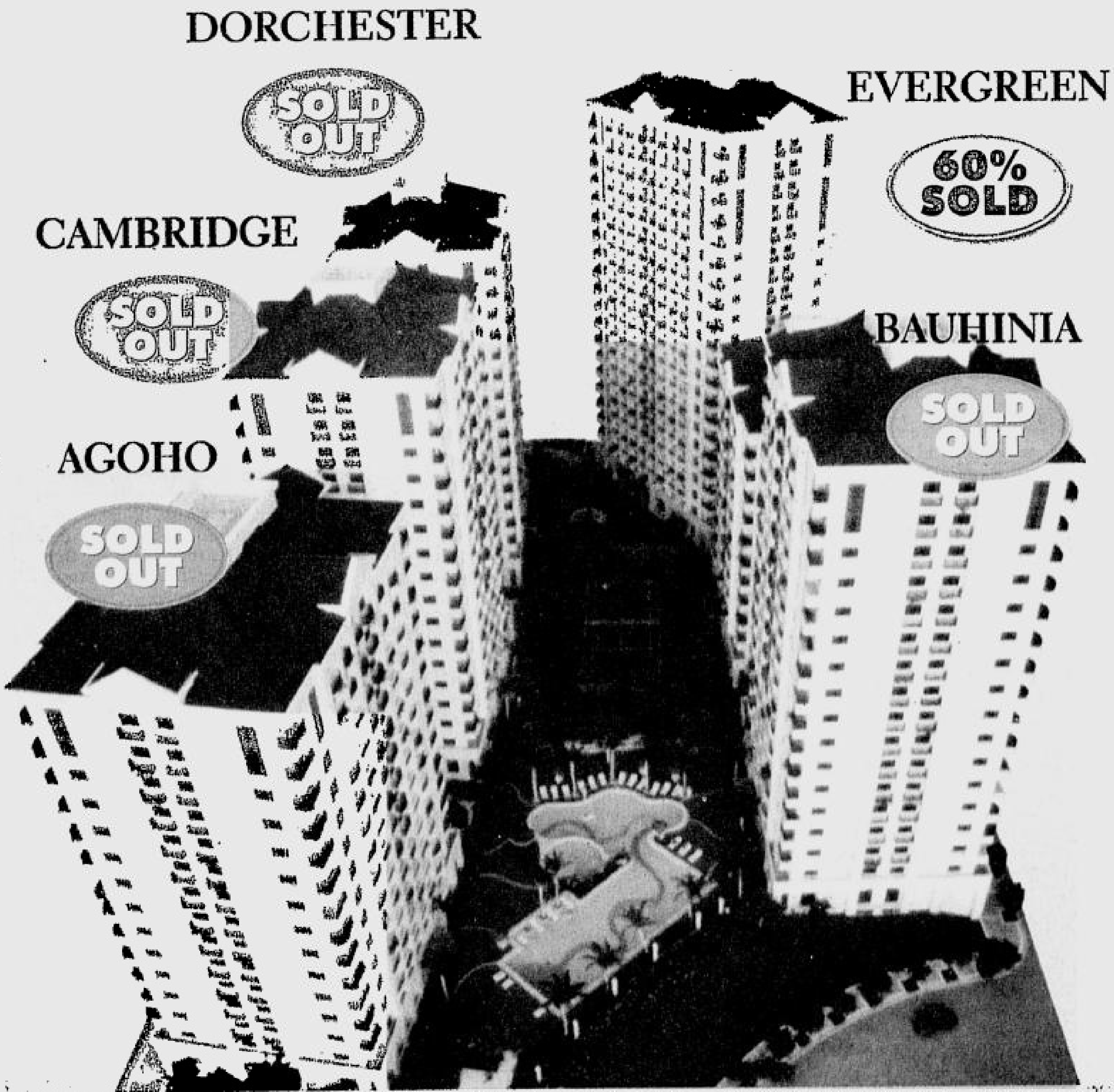
Construction of the six-tower Forbeswood Heights kicked off with a concrete pouring ceremony attended by (from left) Bonifacio West Development Corporation director Kirk U. Young, president Charlie Rufino, vice chairman Jacques Dupasquier, Megaworld chair and president Andrew Tan, 19-1 Realty director Macario Rufino and Megaworld senior vice president Kingson Sian.

Joint venture partners Megaworld Corporation and Bonifacio West Development Corp. recently held a concrete pouring ceremony to mark the start of construction of the first and third towers (Agoho and Cambridge) of Forbeswood Heights. The two are scheduled for completion by 2006.

At the site bordering the Manila Golf and Country Club, an impressive three-story grand showroom offers visitors an intimate view of Forbeswood Heights and its community. Model units showcasing the best architectural and interior designs give clients a taste of the sumptuous lifestyle offered only at Forbeswood Heights. The showroom also features a UCC Café at the ground level, a thoughtful addition for visitors who want to unwind after touring the model units. A few steps away, McDonald's, the anchor establishment of Forbes Town Road, caters to people on the go.



Forbeswood Heights is an address for people who want to enjoy the comforts of home from a luxurious garden retreat in the middle of a world-class city. It is a valuable investment—one that enables customers to own the whole of paradise and not just a piece of it.



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Ineffective deterrent

EDITORIAL

LAST week presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said that President Macapagal-Arroyo was in favor of lifting the moratorium on capital punishment but ll had to hold consultations on the matter. In a statement, the President stressed that "the death penalty is not the end-all to heinous crime."

The call for the lifting of the moratorium on the death penalty was made by the Chinese-Filipino community following the death of kidnap victim Betti Chua Sy. The application of capital punishment has been suspended for the past four years.

It is well that the President has not been stampeded into lifting the moratorium and has decided to consult various sectors. There is no evidence that the death penalty is a deterrent to heinous crimes. The enforcement of the death penalty, and at the rate of one death convict per day (there are more than 1,000 death convicts now), as suggested by the Chinese-Filipino community, will only brutalize society and perpetuate the cycle of violence.

Ms Macapagal would be well-advised to study the experience of 12 US states that chose not to enact the death penalty since the US Supreme Court ruled in 1976 that it was constitutionally permissible. A New York Times survey in 2000 showed that the 12 states have not reported higher homicide rates than those where the death penalty is imposed. Indeed, FBI data show that 10 of the 12 states have homicide rates that are lower than the national average.

The New York Times survey also found that during the last 20 years, the homicide rate in states with the death penalty has been 48 percent to 101 percent higher than in states without it. The FBI Preliminary Uniform Crime Report for 2002 said that the murder rate in the US South increased by 2.1 percent while that in the Northeast decreased by almost 5 percent. The South accounts for 82 percent of all the executions since 1976; the Northeast accounts for less than 1 percent.

Statistics Canada reports that the number of homicides in that country in 2001 (554) was 23 percent lower than the number of homicides in 1975 (721), the year before the death penalty was abolished.

In London, data released by the British Home Office show that the US, which still imposes the death penalty, has a murder rate that is more than three times that of many of its European allies where capital punishment has been banned. The data challenge the argument that the death penalty is a deterrent to killings. More than 110 nations have banned the death penalty in law or practice.

In 1997, Michael Radelet, chairman of the University of Florida's sociology department and a longtime researcher of death penalty issues, said that a study found 90 percent of top US criminologists saying that killing people to deter violent crime is a huge waste of time and money.

Instead of lifting the moratorium on the death penalty, the President should take the lead in moving for its repeal and its replacement with the penalty of life imprisonment without the possibility of parole. Radelet says that when people are asked about current statutes, where the only alternative to the death penalty is life without parole, support for capital punishment decreases significantly.

Why should the death penalty be abolished, or at the very least, why should the present moratorium on its application be retained?

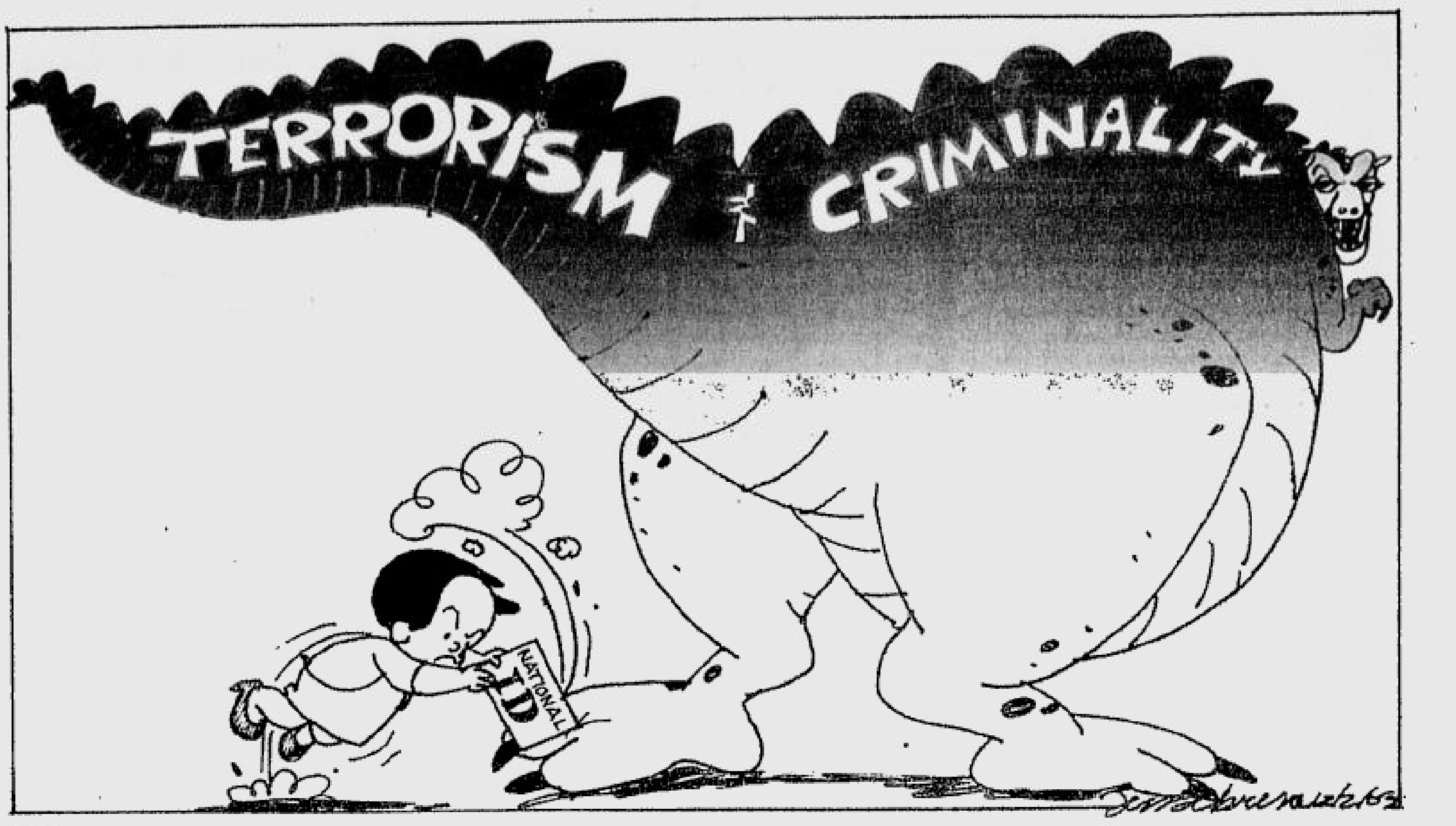
First, because it is an irreversible act of violence by the state and has claimed innocent victims. Because human justice (and especially justice in the flawed Philippine system) is fallible, the risk of executing the innocent can never be eliminated.

Second, because, as US Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall said, "the burden of capital punishment falls upon the poor, the ignorant and the underprivileged members of society." What is true in the United States is even more true in the Philippines.

Third, because the death penalty only serves to create more victims and perpetuate a cycle of violence. If a society truly believes that all killing is wrong, it must abolish the death penalty which only serves to brutalize it and inure it to violence.

Fourth, because the trend in modern penology is to create conditions for the reform and rehabilitation of criminals. How can we reform and rehabilitate criminals who have been executed?

We've said it before and we say it again: The problem is not in the severity of the punishment but efficient and effective law enforcement. If would-be criminals know that they will be arrested for sure by law enforcers and put away for life without any chance of parole, that certainty could deter them from committing crimes.



More explanations from Olongapo and Bulacan

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

(*Continued from yesterday*)

THIS is a continuation of the letter of Mayor Kate Gordon of Olongapo regarding her and Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon's objections to the construction of a container terminal in Subic Bay. In yesterday's column, she said the terminal is unnecessary and in the wrong place. Why incur a P10-billion debt for a seaport that can handle 900,000 TEUs annually when the annual cargo volume in all of Subic is only 53,000 TEUs? she asked. To justify the new terminal, she added, "we would need to build 18 more Subics."

Moreover, a seaport beside the Subic International Airport, she said, would endanger the planes using the airport because of interference from port navigational equipment and tall stacks of containers and loose cargo. Besides, the many people and delivery trucks frequenting the seaport will make the airport extremely vulnerable to terrorists.

"Regarding environmental concerns," Mayor Gordon continued, "we believe that reclamation at Cubi Point will permanently damage Subic's ecological stability, fragile marine ecosystems and beautiful view. Over 2.5 million cubic meters of fill will be dumped into Leyte wharf, adversely affecting the marine ecosystem in Subic. There will be damage to coral reefs and hatching grounds/fish sanctuaries. Mangroves along Boton will be destroyed with the establishment of access roads to the Cubi Terminal.

"The area is also close to popular beaches and dive spots. Officers Beach and most probably All-Hands Beach will be permanently closed, affecting tourism within Subic. The view of the bay that is key in tourism and residential development will be permanently and irreversibly damaged.

"There is an obvious attempt to hush-hush the project to railroad approval and endorsement by concerned government agencies and local government units. The process has been fraught with trickery, chicanery and fraud.

"No true public hearing and genuine and sincere consultation was made with Olongapo City and other areas, the immediate stakeholders in the vicinity. The bidding process began even prior to the consultation process to secure the ECC (environmental compliance certificate) which is being issued after the bid. Bidding began as early as August 2002, and the first consultation was held on Sept. 15, 2003 inside Subic, with limited access to LGUs. The second consultation was held on Oct. 27, 2003, in Olongapo City, and only upon request to the DENR (Department of Environment and Natural Resources).

"Our family has never claimed ownership of Subic or Olongapo. Subic and Olongapo belong to the people of the Republic of the Philippines. It was preserved and protected for us by a courageous and unselfish band of volunteers who put at stake lives and livelihood so that future generations may benefit from what was left of the former US naval facility. We toiled day and night to turn the abandoned base into what became the country's premier showcase of progress and development. And so we fight today so that no destruction will be cast upon our environment and so that our people will not be further burdened with yet another humongous debt that our children and grandchildren will have to pay.

"Finally, I take offense at Mr. Payumo's claim that we are trying to delay the project because we are allegedly lobbying for my appointment as SBMA chairman, and would prefer for the deal to push through when I might be installed. Let me make it clear that my husband and I have never in our lives asked or lobbied for appointment to any government position. All our lives, we have served our people and stood shoulder-to-shoulder with them during the most difficult times in our history. We will continue to do so, and, unlike Mr. Payumo, we need no title and position to do it."

* * *

Here's another letter, this time from the provincial government of Bulacan, reacting to our column of Nov. 13, 2003 regarding the purchase by the Bulacan government of 39 vehicles and from a dealership allegedly controlled by the family of Gov. Jose de la Cruz. The letter, written by Ma. Cecilia Yacob of the public affairs office, says that:

"The province of Bulacan does not have a car plan for its board members and other senior provincial officials. Vehicles that have been purchased by the province that are assigned to department heads remain as government property and are strictly for official use only. These are not luxury vehicles. No board members or councilors are assigned service vehicles at all."

Yacob confirmed that a total of 39 vehicles (not 53) were purchased by the province, including 26 for the Bulacan PNP, two ambulances, and 11 for various departments.

She also admitted that the vehicles were bought from Freeway Motor Sales, "not because the dealership is controlled by the de la Cruz family... but because the terms offered were very advantageous to the government. As to the ownership of the corporation, records provided by the Securities and Exchange Commission shows that although Joselito Mendoza was an original incorporator of Freeway Motors, he divested his shares in the company on Sept. 25, 2000. The Mendoza family, therefore, does not own a single share of the corporation nor does the de la Cruz family."

* * *

TODAY'S JOKE: FPJ was attending an international conference on the environment. A delegate asked him, "Do you have pollution in the Philippines?"

FPJ: Oh, plenty of *pulutan*. We have *chicharon, sisig, asucena, kinilaw, dilis, tapa, pusit, danggit*, and many more.

Lay of the land

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

(*Conclusion*)

WHAT GMA has going for her is the Comelec. So far the fellow who heads it, Bejamin Abalos, has been part of the problem rather than the solution. Among others, he has shortened the registration period and made it the hardest thing for people to register, awarded the winning bid for automated voting and counting to the least qualified bidder and insisted on preventing Namfrel from doing a quick count for free in favor of his own group that would do the same thing for P300 million.

Can GMA win with his help? It's possible. But it flings open the doors to another Edsa. The first one was sparked by massive cheating by Marcos in the "snap elections."

Otherwise, next year's elections looks like a fight between FPJ and Raul Roco, the second- and first-placer in Pulse Asia's survey respectively.

FPJ is popular, no doubt about that. I remember that the Abu Sayyaf itself requested him as negotiator for the release of a TV evangelist it had kidnapped. Erap sent Robin Padilla, who had turned Muslim, instead. Not the same. Fortunately for the evangelist, he was released anyway, though he might have paid less had FPJ come.

There are a couple of reasons why his association with Erap—Erap is his *kumpare* and Erap's handlers, chief of them Edgardo Angara, are behind him—won't hurt him. The first is that Filipinos have short memories. Or Filipinos have a limitless capacity to suspend disbelief, to imagine that what happened before won't happen again. To this day, many Filipinos are willing to give authoritarianism a second chance in the hope that in lieu of a crooked Marcos, a relatively honest Mahathir or Lee Kuan Yew will wield the iron fist.

That's what FPJ's handlers are pitching: FPJ is not Erap, despite the obvious similarities. Unlike Erap, he is clean. He even warned Erap about surrounding himself with unsavory characters. Certainly, he did not profit from his *kumpare*'s position, preferring, according to fellow ex-entertainer Tito Sotto, to stay away from Malacañang, much to the *tampo* of his *kumpare*. And the clincher: He won't have a Second or Third Lady, only a First One.

The second reason is that GMA has banished the opprobrium attaching to Erap. The widespread perception isn't just that the GMA administration is no better than the one it replaced, it is that it is worse. The surveys show all the administration candidates lagging behind those of the opposition, with only Richard Gordon having a crack at becoming senator. That can only be attributed to the "Gloria factor:" She is bringing them down.

There is one thing FPJ should worry about, and that is a backlash. The slide of the peso following his decision to run, whether real or the product of government propaganda, threatens to open the floodgates to it. I've heard people express fears over another movie star becoming president. These are middle and upper classes, the bulwark of the two Edsas. If those voices or noises swell, FPJ might find himself in a position not unlike Danding Cojuangco in 1992: Anybody but.

That Roco should remain number one in the surveys is remarkable. He hasn't had a high profile these past months—indeed since he resigned from the Department of Education. The only times he landed on front page and prime time was when he announced he was running for president and when he defended Davide from his detractors.

One of the reasons for his continued strong showing in the surveys is that he has an image of being clean and competent. He turned the DepEd from one of the most corrupt and inefficient to a showcase office. The charges of corruption have obviously not hurt him. They are minor, and haven't gone past putting out his pictures in calendars, a charge GMA is guiltier of. More than that, if there was evidence of wrongdoing, GMA would have already done to him what she did to Lacson, which is make him an object of a senatorial inquiry. And still more than that, if Roco had not resigned from the Cabinet, he could even now be using its resources to campaign. That is not the behavior of a corrupt person.

But the more important reason for Roco remaining number one in surveys is that the events of the last few months have given the elections an ideological spin. Those events include the country's participation in the invasion of Iraq, the war in Mindanao, the Oakwood mutiny, the Pidal exposé, the Davide impeachment, the Naia takeover, the Betti Sy murder, mounting rallies and coup rumblings. All of which have ground the country to a halt and driven people to ask, "What is happening to the country?" That wasn't the case in the 1998 elections, which was coming from relatively well-off times. The 1997 financial crisis had not yet bitten deeply into the economy. The elections were just a choice between personalities, one where the most popular stood to pluck the crown.

Today's elections have a more tremendous sense of urgency, not unlike the "snap elections" of 1986. That has thrust Roco into the limelight, despite his not being unusually charismatic, dramatic or media-savvy, turning him into the only real alternative to two groups that have proved ruinous to the country, the administration and the opposition. He is the "the least evil," as Jose Ma. Sison puts it, or "the best hope," as his own alliance of Aksyon, Reporma and Promdi puts it. The backlash from FPJ's candidacy stands to benefit him. I have heard people say that where they were apathetic before, they are not so now. They will support Roco because they cannot abide the thought of another six years of an Erap-type leader, which could spell the end for the country. Roco gets more media mileage, or a sustained one, and he can overcome a relative paucity in organization and resources.

That's the lay of the land, and it's not entirely without hope.

News of reward draws 100 phone calls daily

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo is standing firm on her decision to set a moratorium on capital punishment, despite tremendous pressure to lift it, coming mainly from the Chinese-Filipino community and recently lawyer Joe Cadiz, president of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines. This is a controversial issue in the light of the spate of kidnappings, but to her credit, GMA remains firm against it, showing political will. She argues that statistics have not shown that in all the years it was being implemented in the Philippines, capital punishment actually curbed criminality. The abolition of the death penalty is an advocacy in the enlightened world, which believes that criminals can be rehabilitated, and that quite often, criminals are wrongly sent to death row. The President has the support mainly of the Catholic bishops. It will be recalled that Rome greeted her suspension of the death penalty by lighting up the Colosseum for many days.

* * *

Instead of lifting the freeze, the President has sought to offer a reward system for information on criminal gangs. In this connection, Speaker Jose de Venecia has authorized the allocation of P300 million from congressional funds for the reward system, and recently P75 million was actually released. The Speaker said that the response to the reward system has been overwhelming. The day the news came out, his office got more than 100 calls right away. But information is only as good as the actual operation, and here is where good sleuthing should complement determined efforts to run after kidnap gangs.

* * *

Is Sen. Noli de Castro running for president, as a newspaper recently bannered, or for vice president with GMA, as speculated. A Lakas senatorial stalwart whispered to this columnist that "Kabayan" is being groomed as GMA's running mate, perhaps to cash in on his popularity as well as get the support of ABS-CBN. But a Lakas leader from Batangas has intimated that the "Wednesday Group" (so called because they meet regularly on that day), composed of De Castro and Senators Joker Arroyo, Manuel Villar, Francis Pangilinan and Ralph Recto, is trying to make him run for president. The group reportedly argues that while GMA and the ABS-CBN have everything to gain from his candidacy, Kabayan himself has little to gain from being No. 2.

Nothing to gain? If he wins (and few pundits doubt it), De Castro would be one heartbeat away from the presidency. GMA herself, when she agreed to run with JDV, perhaps didn't expect to be president two and a half years later.

* * *

The story of conjoined Filipino twins Carl and Clarence Aguirre is being followed not just by the international medical world but by people around the world because of its human drama. The twins from Negros Occidental have to go through four very delicate operations to separate them at the head. We pray for the success of their third and fourth operations at the Montefiore Hospital in New York in the next few weeks. Conjoined twins occur in approximately one in every 200,000 live births, but twins joined at the head are said to be roughly one in 10 million live births. Many agencies came together to make the operations on the Aguirre twins possible. On the dzRH program I co-host with Cecile Guidote Alvarez every Sunday evening at 9:15 p.m. we had the privilege of featuring Menchu Aquino-Sarmiento, chief of the Philippine Airlines Foundation, which provided a free trip to the US to the twins and their mother Arlene. I congratulate the foundation for its many missions of mercy for sick patients, not only in this country but abroad too.

* * *

The Catholic bishops' spokesperson, Fr. James Reuter, S. J., who writes a Sunday column in the Star, recently paid tribute to the greatness of the Filipino artists. This cannot be disputed. The recent international triumph of the Loboc Children's Choir of Bohol, which is now being hailed as the local version of the famed Vienna Boys' Choir, is an example. Speaking of Vienna, when I was there after the Philippine National Oil Corp. won the recent Energy Globe awards in Linz, I met with Lemuel Cuento, son of my dear friend Esperanza Cuento of Los Baños, Laguna, who has been studying voice in the State Conservatory for the past few years. Lemuel, who is in his early 30s, is, to quote our indefatigable Ambassador Victor Garcia, the best known Filipino tenor there. He sings various opera roles not only in Vienna but in Sweden, Norway and nearby countries.

* * *

When I met him, Lemuel was in the midst of final rehearsals for a role in "Armida" by Austrian composer Franz Joseph Haydn. I asked what it was like to be a Filipino artist in one of the world's music capitals, and he said that the Pinoy can hold his own against the best. "Many times, in fact, we are better," he said, although he admitted that at times being Asian can be a drawback. He noted, for instance, that Asian singers auditioning for roles in an opera to be shown in Tokyo would suffer from discrimination, as the Japanese prefer Caucasians. To offset certain disadvantages, such as the lack of government support for Filipino artists, Lemuel said they just have to work doubly hard.

I asked how it felt to be working with some of the biggest names in the opera world, and he replied that it's often the big stars who are the humblest. He recalled working with Spanish tenor Placido Domingo who made it a point to know each and everyone in the cast. What lessons did Domingo give? Lemuel recalled him saying that one has to have the voice, but in the end what matters are the work and the discipline one puts into one's career. But that's true of every human endeavor—work and discipline truly pay off.

In pursuit of the common good

COMMENTARY

Nandy Pacheco

THE IMPOSITION of the death penalty will not stop kidnappings for ransom and other crimes. What will check the rising tide of criminality? These are the things we believe the government and our people must do:

First, recognize the root cause of the problem. Our tragedy today is due basically to human will opposing the divine will.

Second, our people should change their attitudes and the government should change its policies. Killing people to teach that killing is bad is not effective at all. A gun is made to kill and maim, not to prolong life. Violence begets more violence. Violence ends where love begins. Everyone should try to promote peace and active nonviolence. The government must lead all sectors of society to launch a "Respect Life Movement," and actively inculcate character among our people.

Third, it is time for action. The period of debate is over. Both Houses of Congress must pass a joint resolution, with the concurrence of President Macapagal-Arroyo, declaring as contrary to public policy, public morals, good customs, public interest, public safety and the common good, the glorification of guns, sex and violence in the movies, television, radio, print media, billboards, posters, stickers, etc.

Fourth, for those who believe in gun control no explanation is necessary. For those who do not believe no explanation is possible. An ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure. As a preventive measure, therefore, the President must certify to Congress the urgency of passing a gun control law that will make it a criminal offense for anyone to carry a gun or any other instrument of violence in public places. Only uniformed law enforcers and licensed private security on duty should be authorized to carry firearms in public places and in their duty stations.

Why don't we learn from the example of Japan, South Korea, Malaysia and Singapore, where crime is practically nonexistent because, except for the police officers who are on duty and in uniform, nobody is allowed to carry or keep a gun at home. At the same time, let us "unlearn" what we have learned from America: a gun culture and gun violence.

Fifth, working for the common good usually requires common sense. In order to facilitate the arrest of criminals or violators of the gun ban, the government must enforce the law (or if there is none pass one) banning the use of heavy tint on windows of motor vehicles. In other civilized countries, the use of tinted windows in motor vehicles is not allowed. It is in the "dark" where crime is committed or where criminals hide. It is time for all of us, government officials and citizens alike, to be ready to suffer personal inconvenience for the common good. Crime is committed where criminals find it easy to hide.

> We challenge the politicians to pursue the common good rather than cave in to the demands of special interests

Sixth, long prison terms without parole or pardon (not the death penalty) should be meted out to gun ban violators and those found guilty of illegal possession of firearms. The same severe punishment should be imposed on law-enforcement officers who "plant" evidence against innocent individuals.

Seventh, transparency should be the rule. No mission orders should be given to civilians and no firearms should be issued to plainclothesmen. The authorities should not create situations that will give rise to temptation. Sometimes, plainclothesmen pretend to be criminals and criminals pretend to be plainclothesmen.

Eighth, as an additional security measure legitimate gun owners should be required to install safety boxes in their homes where they can keep their firearms.

Ninth, there should be a periodic inventory and decommissioning as well as destruction of all confiscated firearms.

Tenth, the sale and public exhibit of guns should only be allowed inside military or police camps, but not in malls and other public places. In addition, the importation of high-caliber firearms for personal use or sports purposes should also be banned.

May we hear from the President and the members of Congress and those aspiring to run for public office their reactions to these proposals? We challenge the politicians to pursue the common good rather than cave in to the demands of special interests. If they are sincere about pursuing the common good, they should prove it.

Candidates for public office who cannot go on the campaign trail without armed bodyguards should not run at all. Their families need them more than the country does. And they should not set a bad example for their constituents.

Finally, for the sake of a peaceful and orderly elections, we appeal to the Commission on Elections not to give exemptions from the gun ban to candidates and other civilians during the election period.

Nandy Pacheco is the spokesperson of Nature-Gunless Society and Kapatiran sa Pangkalahatang Kabutihan. E-mail kpkcommongood@hotmail.com or gunless@hotmail.com or call 635-2796.

The 19th century friars

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Bambi L. Harper

BACK in the mid-19th century, there was definitely an anti-friar and even anti-religious sentiment among Spanish intellectuals, an attitude seldom demonstrated by Filipinos.

Half a century before, an English visitor from Hong Kong, Henry Ellis, remarked that the word "*fraile*" had a pejorative connotation among the Spaniards. But while the more educated Spaniards cared little for them or their doctrines and usually used them as the butt of jokes, it could not be denied that their influence over the Filipinos was equal to that found elsewhere under the "Romish" system.

At the turn of the century, after Spain had lost the Philippines to the United States, Nicolas Diaz Perez published his opinion of the loss contending that it was the religious orders that lost the country for Spain. It was, according to him, "the exclusive work of the friars. Such was their politics and their encompassing power that any other influence was impossible except for theirs." The author did not believe that the insurrection was due to the Masons or fomented in the Masonic lodges as General Blanco asserted. Masonry was relatively new to the Philippines and was introduced by Dr. Mariano Marti in 1854. It did not, however, prosper. In 1872 Rufino Pascual Torrejon established lodges too, but only for Spaniards. It wasn't until 1884 that Filipinos were admitted as members.

It was the author's opinion that the friars were paranoid. Diaz Perez claims that in general any impartial data about the situation in the Philippines were considered "filibustering" by the friars. Even the secretary of Gen. Primo de Rivera, Lt. Col. Scheidnages who wrote "Las Islas Filipinas," was thus considered a filibuster.

On May 1, 1898, the American Squadron appeared in front of Manila and General Augusti was told that within two hours the plaza should be turned over to them otherwise they would open fire. The Spanish admiral did not delay the answer: The plaza would not be surrendered.

Immediately the general convoked a Junta de Authoridades in which Archbishop Nozaleda took part. While the majority of its members agreed to resist and fight for the motherland, the archbishop disagreed. He said that everything was lost; that the colonial government could not resist against so formidable an enemy; and that the plaza should be surrendered and ceded.

When the American Squadron positioned itself for the bombardment, the merchant vessels and the armadas of other countries such as Germany, France, England, Japan and France in the waters of Manila Bay retired to the right of Fort Santiago. It is said that these on-lookers were merely waiting to see what the Americans would do and whether they would have an opportunity to take over from Spain.

The commander of the Japanese cruiser sent word to Dewey that the laws of war prohibited the blockade of a plaza when communications were not completely closed as it happened in Manila. Needless to say Dewey ignored him, but their mere presence indicates that Japan had an interest in this country as early as the turn of the century.

In the meantime, we are told, Archbishop Nozaleda, fearful of the bombardment, abandoned his palace and went to live outside the Walled City in a convent. It was rumored that at the least sign of bombardment the carriage of Nozaleda was seen hurrying away. It seemed, they said, that he was on his way to hide in a convent.

Command of the plaza was now taken over by General Jaudenes and a new Junta de Autoridades was formed. Archbishop Nozaleda did return to Intramuros now that the Americans and Filipinos had it surrounded. He continued to strive to convince the generals and government chiefs of the expediency of surrendering to the enemy, maintaining that defeat was certain and trying to diminish the just patriotic ardor of the valiant military.

But on Aug. 13, the plaza was surrendered. Nozaleda began his work among the native priests in order to conserve his position as archbishop of Manila while the entire town council abandoned theirs and embarked for Spain.

The efforts of Nozaleda did not stop here, according to the author. He went to see General Otis to petition for the release of two Spanish soldiers accused of being responsible for the death of two native officials.

The archbishop was espied by the author humble and alone in the anteroom of the American general, like a poor mendicant devil ("*un probre diablo que va a pedir limosna*"). A message from Otis told the archbishop that the general could not see him and he could either wait or leave.

This was said in such an insulting tone that filled the author with anger, despite the fact that he obviously had little use or love for Nozaleda. But he did imply that the archbishop was trying to cotton up to Otis to convince him to retain him as archbishop.

(From "Los Friales de Filipinas," Nicolas Diaz Perez, 1904)

Papa and his music

YOUNG BLOOD

Angela Nikki A. Robas

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

MUSIC has always filled our house ever since I can remember.

My father used to play the piano and the organ and taught a choir in our parish church and in different schools. Papa was so good in music that most people expected us, his children, to follow in his footsteps.

I used to play the piano when I was young. Papa would not let me stop until I got to play the notes right. But the MTV era got the better of me and I wouldn't let my little fingers touch the ivory keys again.

Papa's music was always a source of joy and entertainment in the family. It strengthened the ties that bound us together. Every family affair was not complete without all of us gathering around the piano, singing our hearts out as he played.

The melodious music carried a different tune when Papa got sick. I was 12 when it happened. At that time I wasn't really bothered by his illness. I always looked up to Papa as a strong man. He made firm decisions and was a strict disciplinarian.

After a few months he got well and was able to return to work. Everything was back to normal—or so I thought.

Then last year, he got sick again. I was already old enough to know that Papa's condition needed a great deal of attention. We went to Manila to have him treated. We were told that he needed to undergo a series of operations.

Knowing how strong Papa was, I was sure he would go through everything in a breeze, although deep inside I was scared. He was in the operating room for 10 long hours and had to be brought in there again twice after a few days. Papa survived, and after staying for a month in the hospital, Papa was allowed to come home. I was proud of the courage he showed.

We went back to the province and began a new life. I thought everything was back to normal. I was wrong. Every day the whole family prayed that he would get well, but I could sense that something inside him was stopping him from going on with his normal life.

One night I heard Papa telling Mama: "Why did this have to happen? Why me?"

Tears began to fall from my eyes, and I couldn't help but ask God the same question: "Why did this have to happen to Papa?"

Whenever we went to Manila for Papa's regular checkup, his doctors told us that complete recovery would take a long time but he'd be okay.

But I noticed that Papa was slowly changing. He was becoming insensitive. He lost his cool easily. And he was saying nasty things about himself. I feared that his spiritual life was giving way to despair.

Papa's condition made me strive harder in school. But no amount of success could fill the void I had inside. Papa was always on my mind no matter how hard I tried not to think of his illness. He was there physically but he was not the same Papa that I used to know.

Every night I would pray to the Lord to heal Papa physically, emotionally and spiritually. I waited for my prayers to be answered, to no avail. There were times when I saw him suffering and crying in pain and it pained me more to see him that way because I couldn't do anything but pray.

On Sept. 6 this year, Papa was rushed to the hospital. When I heard about it, I was afraid but I tried to push the grim thoughts from my mind. I prayed, "Lord, let your will be done." It was the hardest prayer I had ever said, but the those words somehow soothed my nerves.

On Sept. 8, Papa died. I thought I was ready and prepared for whatever might happen to him but I was not. I felt lost, sad, depressed, afraid. It was very difficult to let go of someone very dear to me.

I felt very depressed but somehow I also felt at peace. He was too young to die, but Papa had been completely healed spiritually. It was quite heartening to know that he passed away on the Blessed Mother's birthday. I believed Mama Mary held Papa's hand as he made his way to God's kingdom. Later I learned, Papa and Mama even prayed the rosary in the hospital on the very morning before Papa breathed his last.

They say you'll never miss someone until he is gone. True enough, wonderful memories of the times I had with Papa flashed through my mind. Everything around me seemed to remind me of him. But still the fact remained that I would never see him again.

During his wake, many people came to pay their last respect. Masses were said by several priests whom Papa had served when he was still active in the music ministry of our parish. Church organizations held prayer vigils every day. The outpouring of sympathy from so many people was a source of comfort for me.

I will always admire Papa. He was not perfect but he was my role model. He spent his life offering his services to the Church and unselfishly sharing his musical talents for the greater glory of the Lord.

I didn't cry much during his burial, although I was hurting badly within. I was deeply touched when Papa was extolled in church and the grand choir sang at the funeral Mass.

"Eric will always be remembered." "His music will always be heard inside the church." "His triumphs brought pride and joy to the church." "Eric is the music." These words, spoken by his friends and colleagues in their eulogies, will be forever etched in my memory.

Standing before his coffin, I said my last goodbye to Papa and asked forgiveness for everything I did that he didn't approve of. But most of all I told him how much I loved and assure him that I would always love him.

Like one of the men who delivered a eulogy at his funeral said, Papa's death was not the end but only the beginning—the beginning of a new life for me, my sister, my brother and Mama. The road ahead is full of uncertainties and I don't know what the future has in store for me. But armed with the wisdom I gained from Papa's short but meaningful journey here on earth, I will face the challenges head on.

I still mourn Papa's death, and even though I know he's happy playing music in heaven, I miss him terribly. Only recently when I was filling up application forms for my college admission tests, I could hardly bring myself to write "deceased" in the space provided for "Father's Name." It would probably take some time for me to get used to it.

One thing I am sure of is that Papa's music will never die. I can always play it anytime and anywhere I want, because his music is in my heart.

Angela Nikki A. Robas, 16, is a senior at St. Mary's Academy of Nagcarlan (Laguna). She also writes for the school organ, The Marian Herald.

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LETTERS
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

More than common sense is needed

FERNANDO Poe Jr.'s reply in the one-on-one interview with a TV news correspondent left me in complete awe and wonder. When confronted with the question how he would address the country's persistent problems (e.g., kidnapping, economic crisis/poverty), his confident answer was simply; "common sense."

I wondered what my idol FPJ meant by "common sense." To me common sense simply means the logical faculties common to us all (regardless of education and other technical expertise), which we use in dealing with everyday dilemmas.

Given the above definition, may I remind my idol that the Presidency entails more than "common sense." In this day and age, the presidency is expected to deal with complex and overlapping problems in governance, economics, security, among others things Though I do not doubt the integrity and patriotism of FPJ, recent political history teaches us that the country's problems entail much more than integrity and patriotism. Technical competence, i.e., business acumen and the political will to implement reforms, should form a significant part of the mantra of the presidency.

Though one may argue that technical competence may be substituted with a battery of economic and policy advisers, this cannot replace genuine expertise possessed by a leader. Given a situation where advisers conflict on policy issues, the president must possess the necessary acumen to break the impasse and decide what's best for the country. Mr. Estrada failed in this regard when he chose to listen to his *kumpadres* rather than judge policies based on merit.

In the end, I only have one thing to say to my idol FPJ: When you go out in the field to campaign and you hear the deafening cries of your fans, please do not mistake them for the legitimate cries of the Filipino people. Think hard on the concrete things you can do for them. If you can't think anything concrete, you still have time to do what is best!

—BRYAN A. SAN JUAN
Department of Political Science,
University of the Philippines, Diliman,
Quezon City

Best credentials to head Philippine Sports Commission

THE TREATISE of Mike Keon on Philippine Sports, (PDI, 11/21/2003), is the sanest and most rational analysis of what is wrong and how these deficiencies can be corrected in order to get our sports program out of its present level. Keon possesses the best credentials to head a national sports body. His experience in the highest level of the sports hierarchy as Project Director of the defunct Gintong Alay, president of the Phiippine Olympic Committee (POC), and currently coordinating the sports affairs of a local government unit in Ilocos Norte is unmatched by any current pretender to the chairmanship of the Philippine Sports Commission (PSC).

Having been a UAAP champion runner himself, no Filipino, past or present, can equal the experience of Michael Marcos Keon when it comes to Philippine Sports. If President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is serious about "reconciliation" and all that stuff about sports being a medium to develop national pride (just look at what Manny Pacquio's victory did to bolster the sagging Filipino sense of worth), then she should post haste appoint Keon to the PSC.

—APARICIO H. MEQUI, Ph.D.
President, Philippine Association of
Physical Educators, Inc. (PAPE)

'Hua fei'

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

HUA FEI isn't the name of a new Chinese rock band. They're two Chinese words that appear on the cover of a new coffee table book, a direct translation of the English title "Chinese Filipinos."

Some time back, Gilda Cordero Fernando told me I should do more articles about Chinoys (Chinese-Filipinos) because there's still a great divide between "Filipino Filipinos" (sorry about the awkard term) and Chinoys. Well, I think this book does more than what I could ever hope to accomplish even if I were to devote all my columns for the next five years to matters Chinoy.

"Chinese Filipinos," a joint production of Xavier School and Ateneo de Manila's Chinese Studies Program and Jesuit Communications, helps to explain the Chinoy world, not just to Filipino Filipinos but to Chinoys themselves. The chapter titles hint at what you get in the book: "Between Worlds," "Dreaming of Fortune," "Words and Worlds," "Learning Chinese," "Aspects of Ourselves," "Who We Are," "A Symphony of Manners," "Whither Now?"

We are taken back to Fujian (Hokkien), the Chinese province where most Chinoy have their *lao jia* or ancestral home, to Engineer Island, where new migrants had to stay, sometimes for months on end, while their immigration papers were processed. There's even a photograph of "*tua di*" (Hokkien Chinese for "big words"), the certificate of landing allowing someone to enter the Philippines. Many literally received new identities through the *tua di*, getting a new name different from that which they had back in China.

The bulk of the book is devoted to the present. Lush colors splash across the pages, introducing us into the many facets of Chinoy life. Peek into classrooms in Chinese schools where kids learn how to read and write thousands of Chinese words. Get a whiff of the incense from temples, and the *ngohiong* (five spices) from Chinese restaurants. And plug your ears as firecrackers go off and dragon dancers prance along the streets during Chinese festivals.

For a coffee-table book, this one is actually quite text-heavy, with essays contributed by Ellen H. Palanca (who was also the general editor), Clinton Palanca (who was responsible for the main text of the book), Teresita Ang-See, George Siy, Lisa Y. Gokongwei, Benito O. Lim, Jonathan Chua, Aristotle Dy, Francisco Navarro, Doreen Yu, Doreen G. Fernandez, Queena Lee Chua, Caroline S. Hau, John Burtkenley Ong, Go Bon Juan and an INQUIRER columnist surnamed Tan.

My mother observed that the essays, including the one I wrote, tended to be rather ponderous and heavy, which led me to wonder if the book reflects the point we've reached in the evolving Chinoy experience, where a younger generation has in fact become more introspective, curious about the past even as we look to the future.

I was thrilled, for example, to see photographs from the province of Fujian, from which more than 80 percent of Chinese immigrants came. Yet I was slightly disappointed to find most of the photographs were of Xiamen, the largest city. The fact is that most Chinoy trace their *lao jia* to dirt-poor rural areas. It is important that younger Chinoys, especially the more affluent ones, are reminded that it was poverty that pushed our grandparents and great-grandparents to leave Fujian, fighting great odds to carve out a new life.

I also felt the book has too little of the experiences of the Chinoy outside of Metro Manila. Recently while in Legazpi City I stayed at Jennifer's Garden Hotel and was pleasantly surprised to find out that the owner, Johnny Rocha, was the son of a Chinese migrant surnamed Go. The Chinoy are in fact quite widely dispersed, from Cagayan up north down to Davao (where my paternal grandfather settled down) and to Sulu and Tawi-tawi.

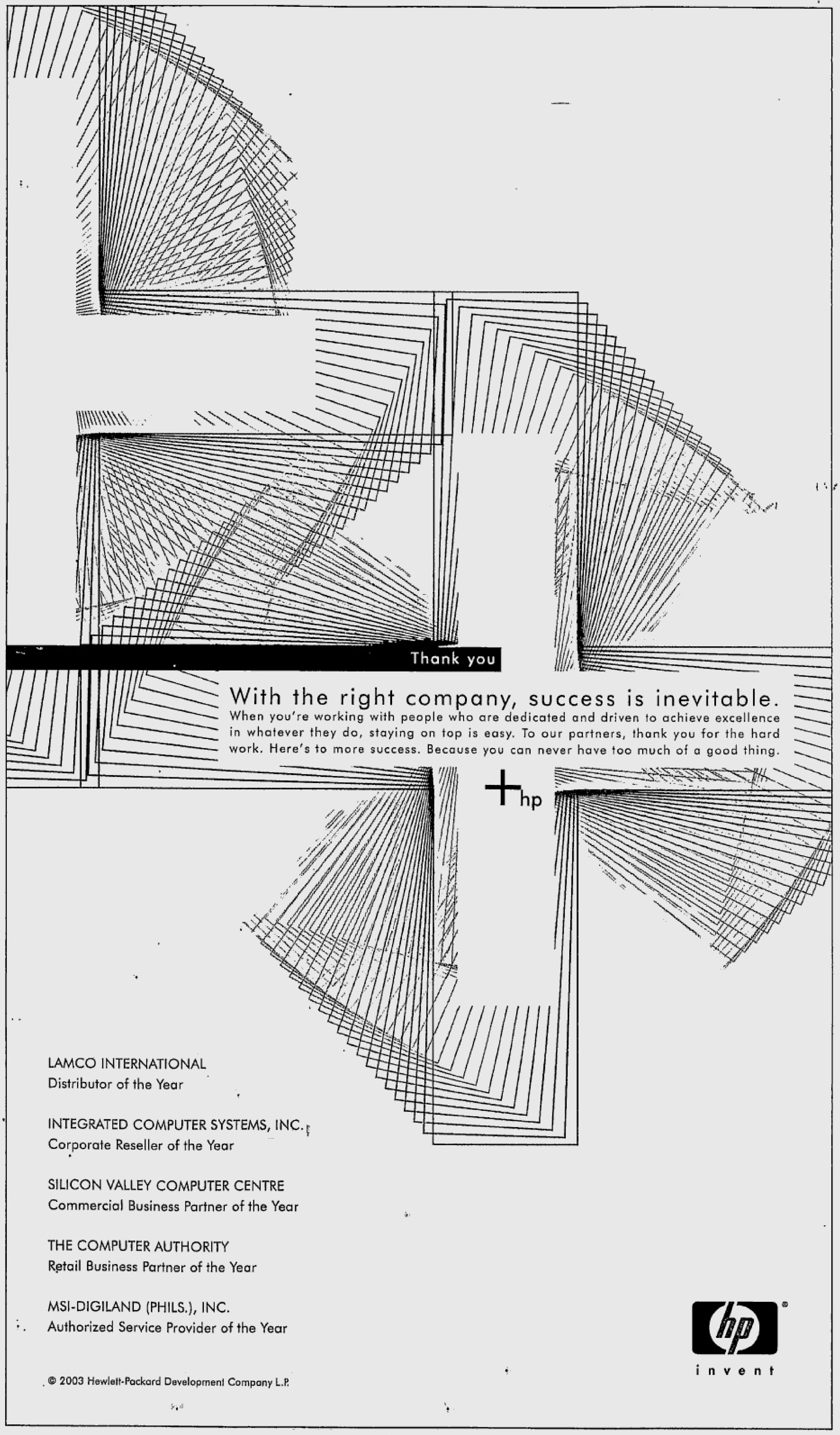
Of course, it is unrealistic to expect one book to cover the entire Chinoy experience. I'm sure there will be some readers who will ask why, besides the two in this book, there aren't more recipes. I found myself wanting more information on language, on religion, on the Chinoy in politics, and on issues not covered in the book, such as the "*chut-si-ya*" (Chinese *mestizo* and *mestiza*) experience.

That hankering for more does reflect how effective the book is as a kind of appetizer. I'm hoping that non-Chinoy, after reading the book, will ask Chinoy friends for more information. And I'm hoping, too, that we will see more books about the Chinoy, perhaps taking up a challenge from Caroline Hau's essay: "No one can claim integration without being forced to question the mainstream into which we are supposed to be integrating," wisely warning us, especially in these troubled times, that "integration is no guarantee that stereotyping and scapegoating will end."

I draw some hope from the book. It is, on one hand, an assertion of the varieties of Chineseness in the Chinoy. Yet at the same time, it is a book that is thoroughly Filipino, its linguistic style, its photographs, its lay-out, all bearing a Pinoy cachet. The description of the blending of the "Chi" and the "noy" becomes the book's most important message: that no one is really born Filipino, that regardless of our ethnicity, whether Ilokano or Tagalog or "Intsik," we must all struggle to become Filipino.

Ready to get "Hua Fei"? In Metro Manila, the book's available at Xavier School in San Juan, Ateneo de Manila's Jesuit Communications office at the Loyola campus, Kaisa Heritage Center in Intramuros, La Solidaridad bookshop in Ermita and the Jescom kiosks on SM Megamall's 5th level and at SM North Edsa (lower ground floor). Outside of Metro Manila, you can get the book at Sacred Heart School-Jesuit in Cebu and Sta. Maria Parish in Iloilo. If you still can't find the book call this Manila number: 426-5971.

"Chinese Filipinos" comes at a non-profit price of P2,200, quite a bargain for a quality coffee-table book. You won't even have to gift-wrap the book since its cover comes in crimson red, with "Hua Fei" emblazoned in gold, making it look like a giant *ang-pao*, those red paper envelopes with cash, given out by the Chinese on special occasions. Like the *ang-pao*, this is a book that will endear, but unlike the red cash envelopes, this is a gift that will endure.



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Angeles City's BOSS now ISO certified

THE ANGELES City Government joins the list of agencies, which caters quality services world wide after Mayor Carmelo "Tarzan" Lazatin's Business Permit and Licensing System — Business-One-Stop-Shop (BPLS-BOSS) acquired its certification from International Standards Organization (ISO) 9001:2000, last November 19.

ISO Certification, according to Lazatin, is the result of the years of process streamlining for better public services.

"This is also one of my greatest legacies to the people of Angeles City — world class service," Lazatin said.

Certification International Philippines, a third party auditor that is accredited by Geneva-based ISO, granted the city its certificate covering the processing and issuance of business permits.

The ISO Certification is valid for three years subject to semi-annual surveillance audit.

After receiving the certification, Lazatin congratulated the Quality Management System team, which carried-out the implementation, and the whole team of BPLS-BOSS, which was established last January to speed-up the process of securing business permits.

QMS is headed by Executive Assistant Irish Calaguas, with Charlie Llandelar, Ana Marie Rodriguez, Gwen Ayson, Gail Bautista, Rea Castro and Milanie Gamboa as team members. Richard Sanchez and the team of top caliber software developers of Information and Communication Technology Division (ICTD) give support to the team.

The BPLS-BOSS is composed of Atty. Alberto M. Suller, Jojo Dalusung, Dexter Cadiang, Albert Castro, Allan Añonuevo, Frank Paz, Rommel Tanhueco, Rodrigo Tanglao, Kevin Mark Paderes, Roberto Sanchez, Ronnel Velasquez, Emily Grace Corpuz, Julie Layson, Mary Jane Mariano, Bernie Gonzales, Jennifer Yalung, Niño Adrian D. Cruz, Hilda Carcabuso, George Magtanong, Ronalyn Meños, Jerome Talavera, Renante Manalastas, Arlan Sunga, Isikiel Kim, Jun Bacani, Francis Capitulo Jr., Ricky Castro, Levi Canlas Jr, Von Ryan Sugui, Alwin Cabrera, Sergio Lagman Jr., Gilbert David, Elizabeth Lagman, Nancesita Gutierrez, Reynaldo Cortez, Macranita Gopez, Roxas Sangalang, Irineo Zapanta, Jr, Linda Dungca, Evangeline Malonzo, Leonila Pamintuan, Higinio Gopez, Emilio Enrico Romero, Irene Rivera, Gilbert Basilio, Enrico David, Eduardo David, Joel Cano, Othello de Guzman, Romy Pangilinan, Norberto Navarro, Ma. Abcde Icban, Carolyn Dizon, Jovita Yu, Elizabeth Manlupig, Maelita de Asis, Mia Velasquez, Vic Montemayor, Rowena Bondoc, August Myron del Rosario, Jesus Agluba, Norma Ramos, Eufracio Manalang, Ismael Pamintuan, Menandro Dizon, Jovita Payad, Sr. Inspr. Belenchito Policarpio, C.Inspr. Nelson G. Feliciano, Edward Laki, Eddy Lacsamana, Diosdado Mallari, Geraldo Sitchon, Emmanuel Vitug, Dante Romero, Romeo Macapagal, Alexander Cunanan, Ricardo Agapito Jr., Job Lalic, Nelson Flores, Richard Medina, Ronald Lorenzo, Melvin Manlutac, Herminio Carbungco, Ma. Gracia Lo-ot, Noeme Serrano, Engr. David David, Engr. Nilda Quito, Ami Victoria Dacanay, Dominic Samia, Emerlito Mercado, Charlie Ang, Alice Taningco, Aris Taningco, Mignette Henson, Dr. Joven Esguerra, Dra. Teresita Esguerra, Francis Valdes, Allan Cunanan, Vladivir Bognot, Nolie Mejia, Lorie Gonzaga, Nicolas Tolentino, Redentor Tolentino, Jesser Mundia, Jacinto Flores, Jose Pring, Edgardo Mendoza, Salvador Villanueva, Alvin Dingal, Domingo Sevilla and Eduardo David

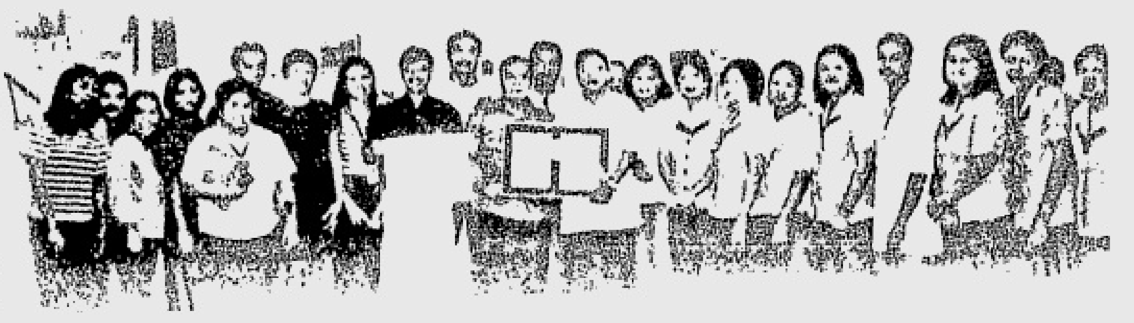
Also included in the group are the members of Internal Quality Audit, namely: Genoveva Florencia Dizon, Chrysalene Cunanan, Teresita Sigua, Luzviminda Añonuevo, Corazon Ayson, Alegria Samia, Nancesita Gutierrez, Menandro Dizon and Merwin Henson

Since BPLS-BOSS was created, the 11 steps of securing business permit were reduced to nine.

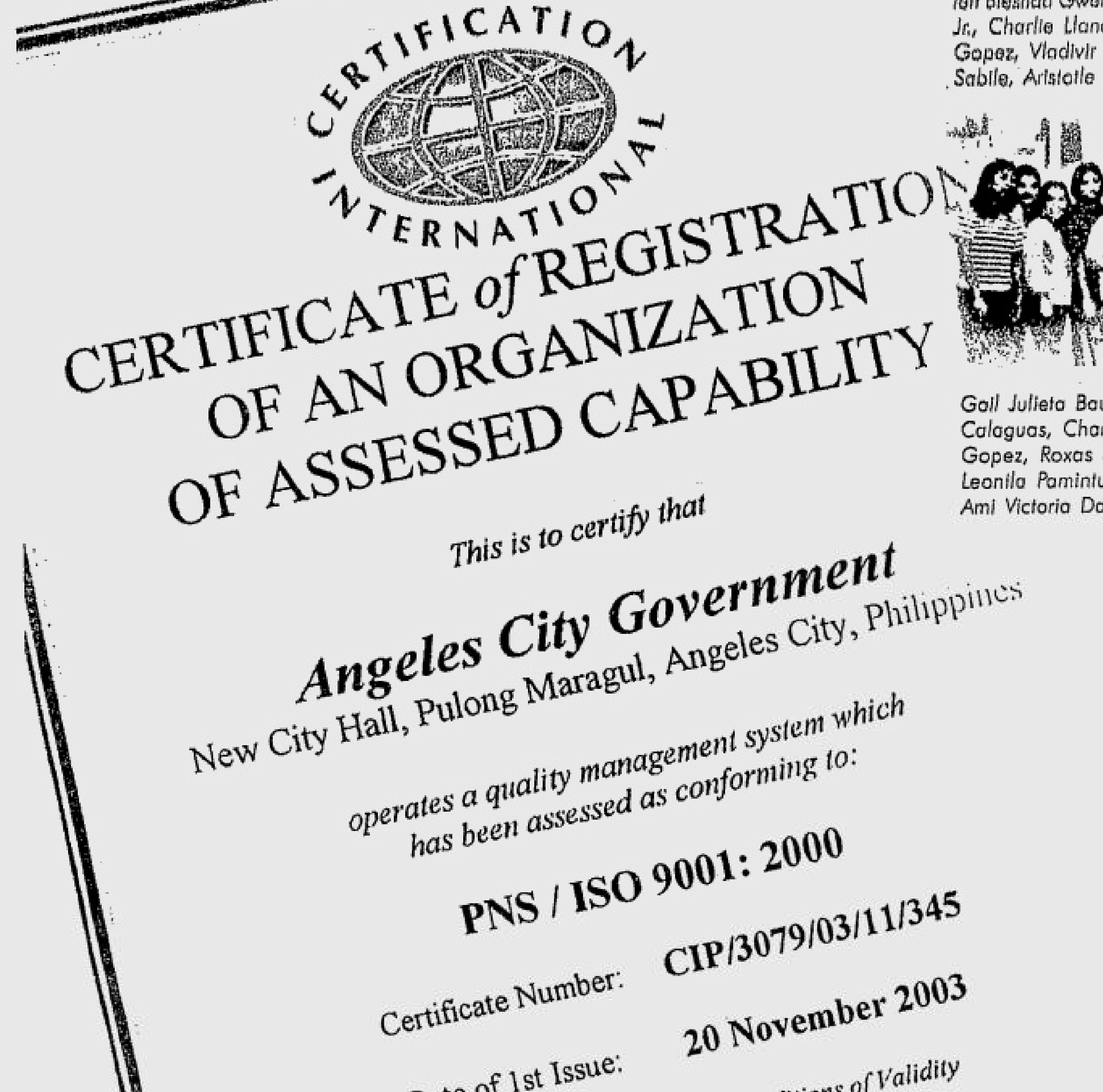
Calaguas said that if all requirements were completed it would only take one hour for businesses not needing inspection and five days for for businesses needing inspection, to secure a business permit.

BUSINE
ONE STOP SHOP

THE MEN AND WOMEN BEHIND THE SUCCESS OF THE BUSINESS PERMIT AND LICENSING SYSTEM — Business-One-Stop-Shop (BPLS-BOSS) pose with Mayor Carmelo Lazatin (11th from left) from left Blesilda Gwen Ayson, Gail Julieta Bautista, Evangeline Malonzo, Leonila Pamintuan, Roxas Sangalang Jr., Charlie Llandelar, Executive Assistant Irish Calaguas, Ana Marie Rodriguez, Rea Castro, Higinio Gopez, Vladivir Bognot, Engr. David David, Milanie Icmat, Norberto Navarro, Irene Rivera, Noeme Sabile, Aristotle Taningco, Eduardo David, Irineo Zapanta and Macranita Gopez.



Gail Julieta Bautista, Blesilda Gwen Ayson, Rea Castro, Milanie Icmat, Executive Assistant IV Irish Calaguas, Charlie Llandelar, Macranita Gopez, Ana Marie Rodriguez, Engr. David David, Higinio Gopez, Roxas Sangalang Jr., Vladivir Bognot, Norberto Navarro, Irineo Zapanta, Irene Rivera, Leonila Pamintuan, Nancesita Gutierrez, Noeme Sabile, Evangeline Malonzo, Aristotle Taningco, Ami Victoria Dacanay, Nilda Quito and Alicia Taningco.



CERTIFICATION INTERNATIONAL

CERTIFICATE *of* REGISTRATION
OF AN ORGANIZATION
OF ASSESSED CAPABILITY

This is to certify that

Angeles City Government
New City Hall, Pulong Maragul, Angeles City, Philippines

operates a quality management system which has been assessed as conforming to:

PNS / ISO 9001: 2000

Certificate Number: **CIP/3079/03/11/345**

Date of 1st Issue: **20 November 2003**

Scope of Certification and Conditions of Validity as defined in the appendix to certificate.

ging Director

Atty. Alberto M. Suller, City Administrator and Irish C. Calaguas, Executive Assistant IV, proudly display the ISO certificates.

THE QMS TEAM. *Mayor Carmelo "Tarzan" Lazatin (third from left) poses with his quality management system team (from left) Team leader Charlie Llandelar, Executive Assistant and Quality Management Representative Irish Calaguas, Senior Process Analyst Ana Marie Rodriguez, Junior Process Analyst Gwen Ayson, Training Assistant Rea Castro, Junior Process Analyst Gail Bautista and Training Assistant Lanie Icmat.*

Advt.

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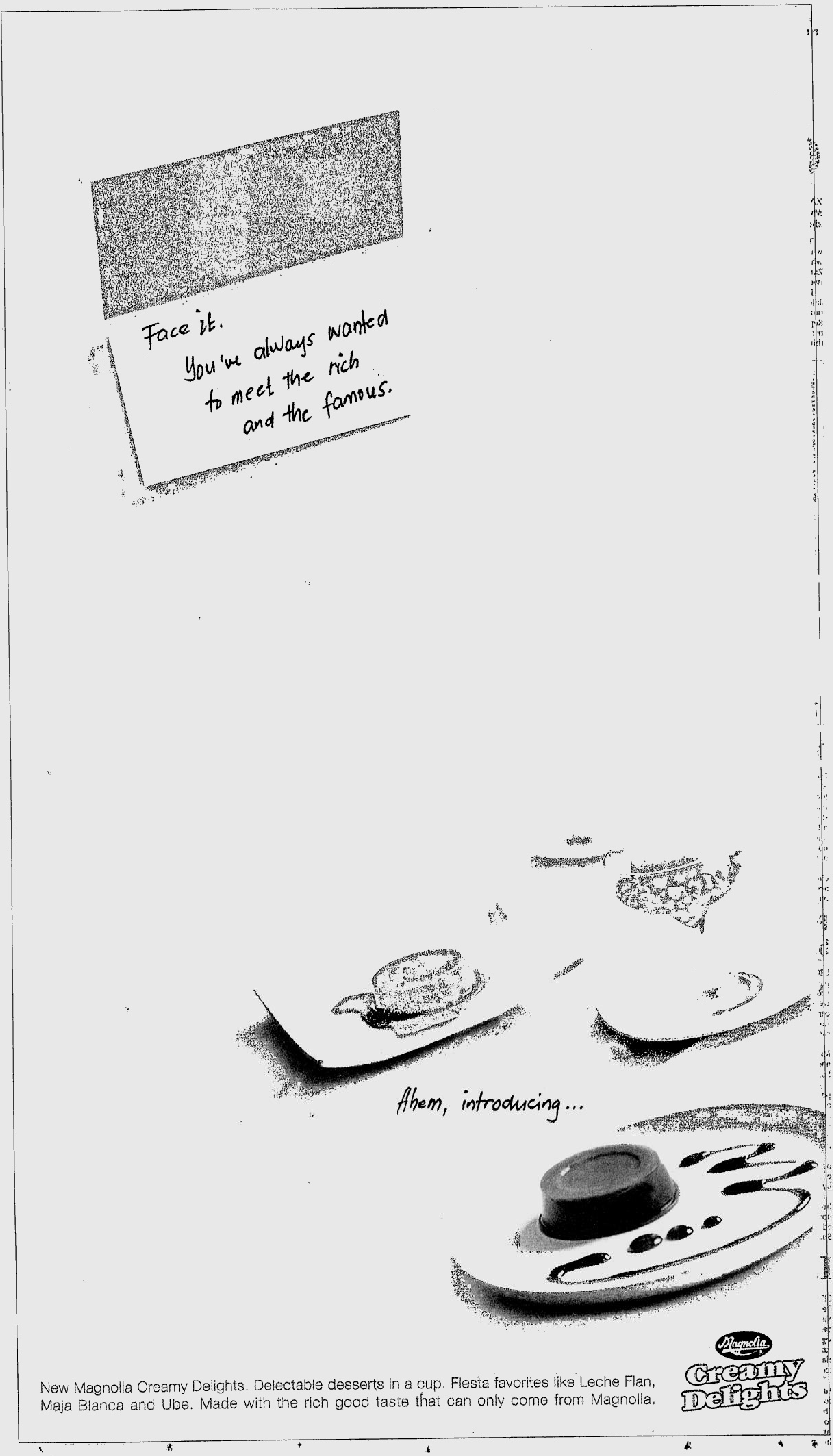
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Across the NATION

Assistant Editor **Tony Bergonia**

Convict calls shots in town polls

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Though behind bars in the National Penitentiary in Muntinlupa, former Zamboanga del Norte Rep. Romeo Jalosjos still calls the shots in his province as far as politics is concerned.

The Alliance of Parties for Progress (APP), which was founded by Jalosjos last year and which he currently chairs, has 21 out of 27 Zamboanga del Norte municipal mayors and two incumbent congressmen under its wing.

In the coming 2004 elections, three Jalosjoses are vying for different elective positions in Zamboanga del Norte—incumbent Rep. Cecille Jalosjos Carreon for the first district of the province, Cesar Jalosjos for the third district and Dominador Jalosjos Jr. for mayor of the city of Dapitan.

Another Jalosjos ward is incumbent Rep. Roseller Barinaga, former Dipolog City mayor.

The APP candidate for governor is former customs district collector for the cities of Zamboanga and Cebu, lawyer Rolando Yebes.

"It is as if Romy (referring to former Rep. Romeo Jalosjos) is with us in all our sorties in the different cities and municipalities of Zamboanga del Norte," an APP member told the INQUIRER.

What promises to be an exciting match is the congressional bout between Romy's younger brother, Cesar, and Zamboanga Norte's third district political kingpin Rep. Angel Carloto.

Carloto, who had been ruling his turf of 12 towns in the past 15 years, is reportedly the underdog as the younger Jalosjos, once romantically linked to actress Maricel Soriano, has eight municipal mayors supporting his congressional bid.

The local executives come from the municipalities of Liloy, Leon Postigo, Salug, Godod, Labason, Baliguian, Siocon and Sibuco.

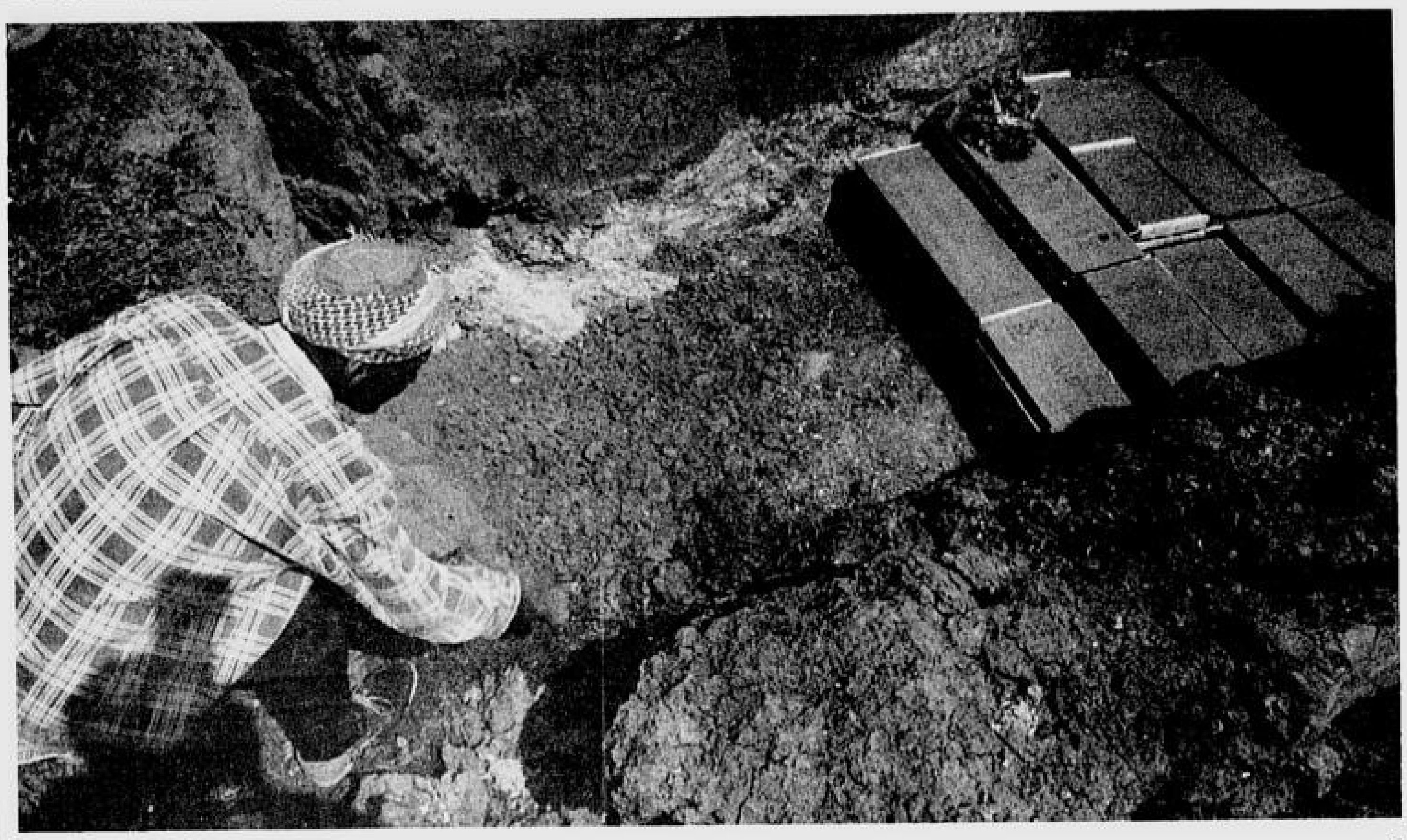
Carloto's sister, Dr. Lourdes Carloto Labiano, who retired from the government service as the director of the Department of Health for Western Mindanao, is running for mayor of Godod.

But the INQUIRER learned that Labianos's residency is being questioned.

Cesar Jalosjos has anchored his campaign on the development of the tourism industry in his district and upliftment of the economic condition of the place.

A sister, Rep. Cecille Jalosjos Carreon, is expected to win easily. Carreon succeeded her jailed brother, Romeo, in special elections held in August where she trounced three other candidates.

Her husband, Rodol Carreon, is the incumbent mayor of Dapitan City who will give way to another Jalosjos, Dominador Jalosjos Jr. *Rolly A. San Juan, PDI Mindanao Bureau*



AP

MASS GRAVE

A man throws earth at a pile of wooden caskets said to contain the remains of at least 49 people, most of them believed to be victims of summary executions, during a mass burial Nov. 28 in Zamboanga City. Authorities said the victims' remains had been left decomposing in mortuaries in the city.

2 South Korean traders killed

CEBU CITY—Two South Korean businessmen were shot dead by three unidentified armed men on Saturday night in Barangay Marigondon, Lapulapu City, Mactan Island.

Cho Yoon Sik and Kim Suk Shin, both 52, were riding a rented Mitsubishi Space Wagon on their way home when fired upon by three men on board a motorcycle at about 10:30 p.m.

Each suffered three bullet wounds in the back. Cho's wife, Lee Jung Hye was hit in the left arm. A bullet grazed the left shoulder of Kim's wife, Kim Ok Ja.

The two were at the wake of their husbands at the Cebu Rolling Hills Memorial Chapel in Mandaue City.

Speaking through an interpreter, the wives told police their husbands had no known enemies, said SPO4 Geoffrey Baguio, head of the Lapulapu police homicide division.

Cho and Kim are business partners and owners of Shabu Shabu Ox, a Korean restaurant at the Marina Mall in Barangay Pusok, Lapulapu City.

The victims were staying at the Pacific Grand Villa in Barangay Marigondon, Lapulapu, about a few minutes away from the ambush site.

The National Bureau of Investigation in Central Visayas had stepped into the case after its help was sought by Kevin Kim, president of the Cebu Korean Tourism Association. *Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Mayor, co-op's tit-for-tat leads to power cut-off

MABALACAT, Pampanga—The Malacañang-formed Pampanga Electric Cooperative (Pelco) management team cut off electricity in this town, including 42,000 households, at 10:30 a.m. Monday after Mayor Marino Morales closed the office here of the Pelco 2.

Morales said he ordered the closure for Pelco 2's failure to acquire a business permit and pay taxes worth P13 million since 1992.

Municipal personnel padlocked the gate of the office and blocked the main entrance with a fire truck. Almost 100 consumers grumbled and questioned why they were being told to leave without being given instructions when they could pay their bills.

About 20 employees were unable to leave the compound that has an eight-feet high concrete fence.

"I'm just exercising my mandate to enforce the laws. If the municipal government requires a small sari-sari store to pay business permits, why can't we do the same to Pelco 2?" Morales told the INQUIRER.

However, the mayor's demand for Pelco 2 to pay local taxes and give the municipal government a share of the national wealth came two weeks after the management team, led by former communist leader Rodolfo Salas, cut off power at the municipal hall.

The team served demand letters asking the mayor to settle almost P8 million in electric debts.

Pelco 2 is most bankrupt, Salas said. Its debts amount to more than P300 million, with the Mabalacat government being one of its biggest erring consumers. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

ROUNDUP

Trader, 2 helpers slain

CABANATUAN CITY—A palay trader and his two helpers were killed after armed men fired at them while they were loading sacks of palay in a cargo truck in Talavera, Nueva Ecija on Friday night. Killed were Edison Lacson, 49, and his helpers Eduardo Geronimo, 26, and Ruel Francisco, 19, all of Talavera. Chief Insp. Sidney Villaflor, Talavera police chief, said the armed men shot the group as they were working in Barangay Homestead. Police recovered spent shells of M-16 Armalite rifle from the crime scene. Investigators are looking into business rivalry as a possible motive for the attack. *Anselmo Roque, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Fishermen rescued

SUBIC, Zambales—Seven fishermen reported missing at sea at the height of tropical storm "Weng" were rescued by Coast Guard personnel off Isla Dimipac in Palawan on Nov. 16. The fishermen were identified as Ace Campania, 26; Allan Tadeo, 15; Leonardo Cabrera, 26; Junior Faigao, 32; Sherwin Barracca, 21; Ramon Barnacha Jr., 22; and Erick Magada, 24, all residents of this town. Reports said the group left this town on Nov. 5 on board the fishing boat MV Emmanuel. They were fishing along the coast of Zambales when huge waves spawned by Weng battered their boat, causing it to capsize. The fishermen, reports said, held on to their boat and drifted at sea. Coast Guard members rescued the group and took them to their detachment in Palawan. *Allan Macatuno, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

2 court employees sacked

SANTIAGO CITY—The Supreme Court dismissed two court employees in this city for falsifying documents and suspended the acting clerk of court for three months for neglect of duty. Ordered dismissed from the service were cash clerks Antonio Quebral and Minerva Alvarez, both assigned to the regional trial court branch 21 here. The Supreme Court, in an 11-page decision, also banned the two from re-employment in government agencies and government-owned and controlled firms. The decision, issued on Oct. 7 but received by the employees only in November, said Quebral was guilty of "dishonesty, gross neglect of duty, habitual absenteeism and conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the public," while Alvarez was found guilty of dishonesty when she used a fake certification that she had undergone the Civil Service Commission's 40-hour personnel management course. *Villamor Visaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Anti-prostitution bill

SUBIC BAY FREEPORT—Participants in the first National Conference of Victim-Survivors of Prostitution held here recently called for the passage of an anti-prostitution bill, which seeks to penalize all actors who profit, financially or sexually, from prostitution. The proposed bill, according to them, would provide comprehensive support services for prostituted women and survivors of prostitution. During the conference, 75 prostituted women from the cities of General Santos, Cagayan de Oro, Cotabato, Davao, Cebu, Angeles and Olongapo and Metro Manila scored government personnel, policemen and soldiers for violating their rights. *Allan Macatuno, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Farmers fight back, kill rebs

LEGAZPI CITY—Three New People's Army rebels were killed Saturday by four abaca farmers who were forced to fight back after a certain "Ka Rommel or Ka Andy" fired shots at them, hitting one of the farmers.

The farmers were identified as Mario Taoc, Jose Taoc, Arnulfo Capil and Sonny Capil of Barangay Tubrehon, San Miguel, Catanduanes.

Chief Supt. Jaime Lasar, Bicol police director, said the four were on their way to their abaca plantation when they met the rebels who were allegedly on their way to collect revolutionary taxes from the villagers.

Witnesses said Ka Rommel recognized Sonny Capil as the brother of Danilo Capil, a militiaman slain by NPA rebels last year in Albay.

The farmers grabbed the firearms of some of the rebels and opened fire as the rebels retreated. *Gil Francis Arevalo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Gov seeks help on fall of sugar prices

BACOLOD CITY—Negros Occidental Gov. Joseph Maranon has called on the national government to stop the decline of prices of raw sugar in the market.

He said sugar prices have dropped to as low as P765 per 50-kg bag (lkg), adversely affecting the 5 million people who depend on the sugar industry.

The governor warned that if the prices of sugar continue to decline, the popularity of President Macapagal in Negros Occidental might wane.

Enrique Rojas, president of the National Federation of Sugarcane Planters, raised suspicion that the smuggling of raw sugar has pulled down prices.

If no smuggling was going on, he said sugar prices should be above P800 per lkg.

Rojas said when sugar milling began in October, prices of raw sugar were between P825 and P830 per lkg.

By end of October, he added, prices began to drop and continued to drop every week since. In some mill districts, he said, the prices of raw sugar were P750 per lkg.

He said sugar producers and workers would be gravely affected if the decline was not stopped.

Rojas said they were checking reports of sugar smuggling in Cebu and Mindanao.

"In some port areas in Mindanao, we have been informed that sugar is selling cheap even if they are not sugar-producing areas," he added.

"Something fishy is going on," he also said. *Carla P. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Isabela town to have bridge next year

THE MUNICIPALITY of Mallig, Isabela has for years been trying to be the next rice granary of the country and it would soon see its dream come true.

Acting Public Works Secretary Florante Soriquez said in a statement that in April next year, the town will enjoy the benefits of the new Casili Bridge.

He said commuters will have faster and more comfortable travel while goods and services would be delivered more efficiently with the completion of the bridge.

He said the bridge was fast-tracked in line with President Macapagal-Arroyo's directives.

The bridge is 56.2 meters long and is now 38.5 percent complete, said Soriquez.

The bridge costs P20 million to build.

Mallig was recently acknowledged by the national government as a leading rice producer in the country.

DENR exec opposes Aurora total log ban

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—The Department of Environment and Natural Resources chief in Aurora has opposed the proposed total log ban in that eastern Central Luzon province, warning that the plan would cause "serious socio-economic repercussions" there.

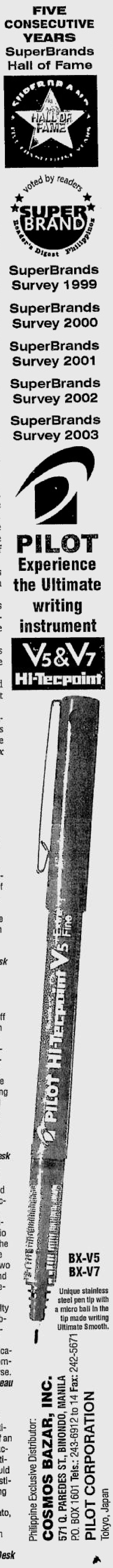
The plan, being lobbied by the Aurora-based Multi-Sectoral Action Group (MSAG), was not feasible unless viable livelihood options were identified for thousands of residents dependent on the operations of at least nine logging companies in the province, DENR Provincial Director Ricardo Calderon said.

In a statement here, Calderon did not say how many local residents are directly employed in those firms. Residents in Aurora totaled almost 173,000 two years ago, a government census showed.

The MSAG had reported gathering more than 10,000 signatures in the campaign pressing the DENR to stop the cutting of trees in the province's forests because:

- These host the watersheds of the Angat, Pantabangan and Casecnan dams that feed the water system in Metro Manila and Central Luzon.
- These are the irrigation sources of 12,000 hectares of farmlands tilled by 63 percent of the province's population.
- These are sources of forest products that are the main livelihood of members of the indigenous tribe Dumagat.
- These are the storm belts that protect Aurora, which faces the Pacific Ocean, a regular path of typhoons.
- These have become tourism destinations that give livelihood opportunities to residents in upland areas and along the coast.
- Flashfloods have occurred with increasing regularity in the last 10 years, killing about 20 people.

Calderon said the DENR was "very serious" in its mandate of protecting what remains of Aurora's forests. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*



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Meralco to collect ₱2B from rate hike

From page A1

"This number is already based on a conservative estimate of kilowatt-hour sales in 2001. The agenda is clearly profit-making more than anything else. At the receiving end is the consumer who has to carry the increasing burden of high power rates, especially during the holiday season," Reyes said.

But Meralco officials said revenues from the increase would all go toward the maintenance and expansion of the company's power distribution system.

"We want a capital expenditures (fund) of P6.5 million for 2004, but this rate increase would only raise for us about P164 million a month or P1.9 billion in a year," Meralco president Jesus Francisco said at a briefing.

Francisco said the higher rates had nothing to do with Meralco's multibillion-peso refund to customers, for which it has so far shelled out about P4.7 billion. The refund, which is estimated to reach P28 billion, stems from a Supreme Court decision last year barring the company from passing on to customers its income tax payments since 1994.

Meralco was last granted an increase of 8.65 centavos per kWh rate in May, its first rate increase since 1994.

Reasonable rate

"We asked for this rate increase to get a reasonable rate of return (on our investments and not because we need money for the refund)," Francisco said.

In an order dated Nov. 27, the ERC said: "Meralco's claim that its present financial condition has resulted in the deferral of major capital projects [such as distribution lines and substations] ... is well taken."

"The inability of Meralco to construct much-needed capital projects to meet its customers' growing demand and, at the same time, ensure reliability and efficiency of its existing system would ultimately be to the prejudice of the consumers," the ERC said.

Meralco officials said the firm had deferred 42 such projects over the last five years. From 1999 to August this year, Meralco had set aside P25.29 billion in capital expenses or P18.84 billion less than the proposed P44.13 billion.

"On the average, we are spending 40 percent less than we think we should to meet customer demand," Francisco said.

Meralco said independent credit rating agency Standard and Poor's had downgraded its rating four times within the year. The rating currently stands at "CC," which is below investment ratings.

Meralco treasurer Rafael Andrada told reporters that part of next year's rate adjustment would be used to pay off Meralco's debts, of which P14 billion will mature in 2004.

Of the 12-centavo rate increase, 8.2 centavos would actually go to Meralco while 3.8 centavos would go to the government as income tax, according to Meralco's chief of utility economics Ivanna de la Peña.

The company had originally requested an increase of 13.58 centavos per kWh. It said it expected a boost from economic activity related to May's national elections, predicting a 5 percent year-on-year rise in the volume of its power sales next year from this year's projected growth of 3.2 percent.

The key shareholders of Meralco are the government and a joint venture between energy firm First Philippine Holdings of the Lopez family and Spain's Union Fenosa.

Protests

Bayan is set to meet with other consumer groups this week to plan protest and legal actions against the rate increase.

Sen. Noli de Castro, who is also known as "Kabayan," distanced himself from the increase granted Meralco.

"What can I say?" said De Castro in an ambush interview in the Senate.

The senator, whose candidacy in 2001 was supported by the Lopez family's ABS-CBN television network, said he could not comment on the issue because he had nothing to do with Meralco, which is also owned by the Lopezes.

Asked whether the increase was one of the concessions sought for by the Lopezes for allowing a GMA-Kabayan tandem in 2004, he said: "No. None yet. None."

He was emphatic in saying there was no deal between the Lopezes and President Macapagal-Arroyo.

De Castro disclosed that he had yet to have a one-on-one meeting with the President. "We have yet to talk."

Citing an unimpeachable source, Drilon confirmed earlier a GMA-Kabayan tandem in 2004 as part of the deal to bail out the Lopez business empire from its economic woes. In exchange for De Castro not seeking the presidency, Ms Macapagal would allegedly help the Lopez firms Meralco, Maynilad Water Services and Benpres Holdings recover their losses through presidential intervention. *With reports from Alcuin Papa, Michael Lim Ubac and Reuters*

PRESIDENT Macapagal shows a letter of support from the Association of Chiefs of Police during its 5th National Convention at the Manila Hotel. PNP Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco, Gen. Arturo Lomibao and Gen. Ricardo de Leon welcomed the President. VAL HANDUMON

FPJ won't submit to selection process

From page A1

Poe, who is down with the flu, about the meeting.

"We're looking at his schedule and, hopefully, he will feel better by today and in the next few days we would be able to iron out his schedule," the senator told reporters.

Sotto said he was not sure if Poe would be available on Dec. 3.

Lacson said he was willing to wait for Poe. "What is important is that we talk and we resolve the issue," he told reporters.

Sotto added a note of urgency, saying he wanted "to settle the matter as early as possible."

But proof that all was not well between the two camps surfaced yesterday, when San Juan Rep. Ronaldo Zamora, Lacson's campaign manager, said the five-man panel formed to organize the meeting between Poe and Lacson was only mandated to arrange the meeting, and not "to impose any form of selection process between the two presidential bets."

In a letter to former Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, who heads the panel, Zamora made the clarification following news reports that the panel had such a mandate.

"Insisting on it might only cause further disunity in the ranks of the opposition," Zamora said.

Giving way

Zamora said that during the Nov. 26 meeting of opposition leaders, it was agreed that Poe and Lacson would confer by themselves and "hopefully reach an agreement that will unite the opposition through the giving way of one candidate over the other."

"Very clearly, we reached a consensus during the meeting that any selection process in the opposition camp will never materialize unless Senator Lacson and Mr. Poe first agree who should be the united opposition's standard bearer," he said.

Zamora also noted that Poe had not confirmed his attendance at the Dec. 3 meeting.

Aside from Enrile, the panel's members are Sotto, Zamora, former Agrarian Reform Secretary Horacio Morales and Makati Rep. Agapito Aquino.

In a bid to allay fears that the LDP was breaking up, LDP president Sen. Edgardo Angara said over the weekend that the party would announce its decision in 10 days.

"The complete powerhouse slate of the opposition—from the presidential tandem to the 12 senators—will be announced in 10 days," he said.

Wishful thinking

Sotto said Poe was determined to stand for election next year, contrary to speculation that the latter was not serious about his candidacy.

"It's wishful thinking for those saying that," Sotto said.

He also said the black propaganda against Poe has already started, with the plan of Lakas officials to scrutinize the citizenship of the popular movie actor. Poe is a Filipino citizen, he insisted.

He got categorical support from the Bureau of Immigration, which issued a statement yesterday saying the actor was a Filipino and had a passport to prove it.

"According to what we have just submitted (to the office of Commissioner Andrea Domingo), the Department of Foreign Affairs has issued a passport to Poe ... He is a Filipino," bureau lawyer Gary Mendoza said in a phone interview.

"The passport was issued by (Foreign Secretary Blas Ople) and, according to the DFA, Poe also had a passport in the '60s which he lost," Mendoza said.

The BI official said Poe was holding a new passport issued by Ople.

He added that the passport was issued after Poe submitted a birth certificate issued by the National Statistics Office confirming that he was a Filipino.

But in Congress, Deputy Speaker for the Visayas Raul Gonzalez continued to take potshots at the actor.

Gonzalez said the actor was not the real Fernando Poe Jr.

"The real FPJ is already dead," Gonzalez said, referring to Poe's elder brother, who was the real Fernando Poe Jr. and who died in 1995.

"Poe has adopted Fernando Poe Jr. as his screen name but for purposes of running for president, I think that is misleading," he said.

Gonzalez said that the Revised Penal Code requires persons using names other than their real names to register these to make their use legal.

"If he cannot tell the public his real name, then that does not augur well for the country which he wants to lead," he said.

He said he was raising this point because Poe himself said on Nov. 26 that he was Fernando Poe Jr. and that he was running for president.

"Poe's real name is Ronald Allan and that's why his close friends call him Ronnie or Kuya Ronnie or Tito Ronnie," Gonzalez said. *With reports from Martin P. Marfil and Carlito Pablo*

Erap allies split between Ping, FPJ

By Michael Lim Ubac

EVEN FORMER officials identified with deposed President Joseph Estrada are split between opposition candidates Fernando Poe Jr. and Sen. Panfilo "Ping" Lacson.

Manny Portes, chair of the Freedom, Peace and Justice (FPJ) Movement, said those supporting Poe were former Finance Secretary Jose Pardo, former National Economic and Development Authority Chair Felipe Medalla, former Agrarian Reform Secretary Horacio "Boy" Morales and a group of University of the Philippines economics and public administration professors led by Dr. Raul de Guzman, Estrada's brother-in-law.

Portes said businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco's Nationalist People's Coalition was also supporting Poe, together with personalities from "other political parties."

He identified Samar Gov. Raul Daza of the Liberal Party, Batangas Gov. Hermilando Mandanas of Reporma, Bukidnon Gov. Jose Zubiri of Lakas-CMD, Negros Oriental Rep. Jacinto Paras of Lakas-CMD, and former Agusan del Norte Rep. Charito Plaza of Reporma.

"This means that a conglomeration of members of all political groups in their individual capacity as politicians are going for FPJ," Portes said.

But the Lacson camp claimed its share of Estrada's "bright boys."

Rep. Ronaldo Zamora, Estrada's executive secretary, said several members of the House of Representatives from the LDP and the PMP were behind Lacson.

As for Estrada's Cabinet men, Zamora identified former Secretaries Benjamin Diokno, Alberto Romualdez, Bienvenido Laguesma, and even Felipe Medalla as members of Lacson's economic team.

As for the unconditional support of the influential Chinese community, he said: "I hope so. But we don't just bank on any one particular sector. Obviously, we want to have a presidency that is based on as many sectors, and as many support areas as possible."

But sources in the Lacson camp confirmed that the Binondo-based Chinese were solidly behind Lacson, whom they perceive to be the answer to the worsening peace and order situation.

Zamora said that of the eight or nine largest provinces, "five of them have already committed to us."

Defensor: GMA's new 'guy-to-ask'

From page A1

regular source of media reports, was "speaking on his (own) behalf."

"As of now, the only authorized spokespersons of the President are Secretary (Ignacio) Bunye and (Cabinet Secretary Ricardo) Saludo. All the others are not prohibited to speak but they are not to speak for and on behalf of the President. So Secretary Alvarez is speaking on his own behalf and not for the President," Defensor said.

Defensor, one of Ms Macapagal's most trusted aides, defined his powers in a single sentence: "I will be speaking on the total campaign, not only on the President but on the different political issues that would be arising from the political exercise."

Ms Macapagal also appointed Philippine Star columnist Alexander Magno as deputy campaign spokesperson for economic issues.

Bunye, her spokesperson, presented Defensor yesterday to Malacañang reporters as the "guy to ask" on all political matters concerning the President and her candidacy.

Asked what happened to the President's adviser on political affairs Hernani Braganza, Bunye replied: "The reason why we're making Secretary Defensor available on a full-time basis is we realize the problem of media persons in trying to get a quick reaction."

Coalition ticket

Asked why Ms Macapagal tapped a member of the Liberal Party instead of someone from her own Lakas party, Bunye said "the message is there that this will be a coalition ticket."

Defensor said the administration was in fact moving to consolidate its coalition with its old allies and was looking for a new coalition name.

He said the LP and "some members" of Reporma and the Nationalist People's Coalition remained with the administration. Former Rep. Oscar Orbos of Reporma, the TV host, was "with us" even though his party, headed by Renato de Villa, had bolted the People Power Coalition along with Raul Roco's Aksyon Demokratiko and Emilio "Lito" Osmeña's Promdi, he said.

The three smaller parties have banded together to form Roco's "Alliance of Hope."

Defensor said 10 NPC members, including Eastern Samar Rep. Marcelino Libanan and former Speaker Arnulfo Fuentebella, the father of Rep. Wimpy Fuentebella, had joined the administration.

"We will finalize the name of the coalition," Defensor said.

He said the Wednesday group of Senators Joker Arroyo, Manuel Villar, Francis Pangilinan, Ralph Recto and Noli de Castro was also included in the coalition.

Defensor said the administration was now in the middle of selecting its candidates for vice president and senator.

He said the criteria for selection included integrity, "winnability" based on surveys and performance, and track record.

He said the candidates would be named in mid-December.

Defensor named Senators Robert Barbers and De Castro, Senate President Franklin Drilon, Metro Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando, Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon, Trade Secretary Manuel Roxas II and even opposition leader Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. as among those being considered Ms Macapagal's running mate.

Campaign tidbits

Defensor also disclosed tidbits about Ms Macapagal's campaign, including the campaign color and an upcoming jingle.

"We have not decided on the color, but if you noticed, the President always wears blue—powder blue—that's the color I think the President is more comfortable with," Defensor said.

Ms Macapagal has explained that she wears clothes in powder blue because it is a color associated with the Virgin Mary.

What hand signal will Ms Macapagal's campaign use? Defensor said they had not thought of one yet.

But Defensor said the Philippine flag would have a prominent presence in the campaign because Ms Macapagal was not just a candidate but also the incumbent President.

Peso rallies amid political uncertainties

From page A1

On Friday, the peso closed at a new all-time low of P55.73. On Thursday, the peso closed at P55.69 after falling to a historic intraday low of P55.85, largely in reaction to the announcement of movie actor Fernando Poe Jr. that he was running in the presidential election in May next year.

Buenaventura said the central bank has not spotted any speculative activity in the foreign exchange market which usually accompanied the peso's tailspin in the past.

"The exchange rate in the gray or black market is not far off from the spot market rate," he said. "During periods of volatility, the BSP is always there to monitor everybody's activity. It is not just now that we are doing this."

The central bank monitors the informal market, particularly the so-called Binondo Central Bank, during times of volatility, to check whether the differential between the two rates is substantial.

Stabilizing

"I think the peso should start stabilizing given that most of the noise had already come out unless we would have new surprises. We are seeing more inflows than outflows at this point," he said.

Buenaventura said an expected improvement in export receipts in the last two months of the year and a rise in foreign portfolio investments in the country should also lift the peso.

Exports rose 2.3 percent in the year to September, with electronics shipments—which make up about two-thirds of overall exports—up for the first time in six months.

Buenaventura said dollar remittances from millions of overseas Filipino workers—mostly nurses, caregivers, seafarers, domestic helpers and IT professionals—were expected to rise 6 percent this year from $7.2 billion in 2002.

The government originally estimated remittances would not grow this year due to the Iraq war. But Buenaventura said dollar remittances from the OFWs should hit $8 billion in 2004 thanks to the improving global economy.

The central bank governor said a peso recovery to the 54 level by year-end would be very difficult. "It would probably stay where it is, if not better," he said.

Buenaventura said the peso should be trading at about 52-53 to the dollar were it not for the political turmoil.

Traders, however, said the peso could easily weaken to 56 to the dollar with another major political development.

Technical analysis

In the last two weeks, the peso had been adversely affected by the resignation of Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho, a warning from Moody's Investors Service that it could downgrade the country's credit rating, and Poe's presidential bid.

Despite breaking new ground at the end of the three-week downtrend, analysts said momentum indicators such as the Relative Strength Index (RSI) and Stochastic Oscillators showed a bullish bias for the dollar against the peso.

The RSI is a momentum oscillator that compares the momentum of gains versus losses over a period. The Stochastic Oscillator compares where a currency closed relative to its range over a given time period.

"Dollar-peso should inch higher steadily toward 56 in the medium term," said Su Tow Keong, a technical analyst with IDEAglobal.com.

Su said the monthly chart showed two consecutive white candles, which supported that peso-bearish view, and that the dollar-peso pair had broken out of a triangle through the 55.59 level last week.

Robin Wilkin, a technical strategist at JP Morgan in London, said a channel projection on the chart showed the peso could head toward a 56.91 target in about two months.

"There's nothing in terms of momentum to suggest that a turnaround is happening," he said.

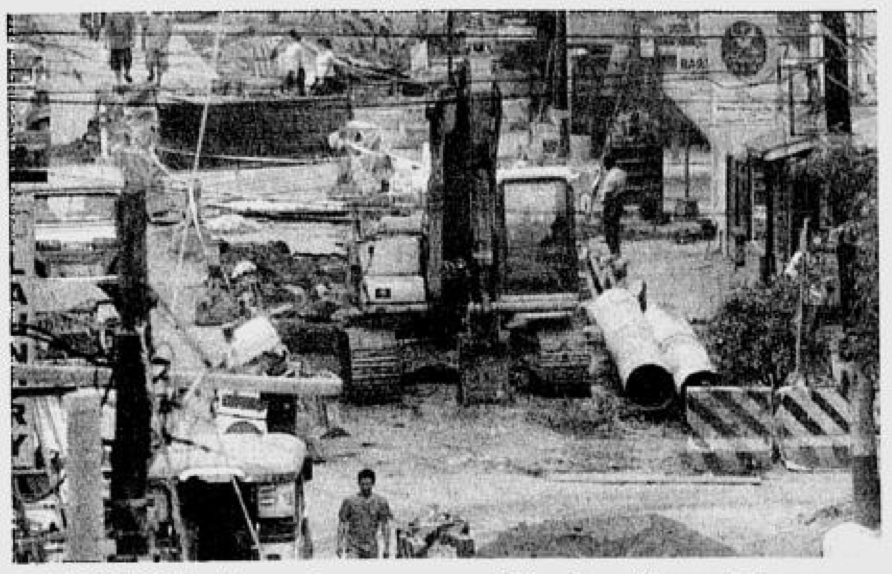
Unless the peso rallied past a congestion zone around 55.30, in which it had spent three months since August, and moved toward a trendline resistance at 55.01, Wilkin said he saw no risk to his bearish peso outlook. *With a report from Reuters*

METRO

E-mail: pr_metro@inquirer.com.ph

Editor **Abelardo S. Ulanday**

More road diggings suspended



ROADWORK, like this monstrous eyesore on Chino Roces (formerly Pasong Tamo) Ave. in Makati City, will be put on hold for the holidays, according to the MMDA. JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

By Margaux Ortiz

THERE will be no more road diggings this Christmas season.

Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando yesterday announced that his agency has stopped issuing permits for new excavations in national and local roads.

He said that with the moratorium on road diggings, which began yesterday and will end on Jan. 3, they hope to ensure smoother traffic flow during the holidays.

"Ongoing road projects could however be completed," Fernando said. "What we are banning is the 'breaking' of roads and pavements."

Fernando said that people caught violating the moratorium would be fined up to P20,000. He also said that the excavation equipment of violators will be impounded, while corresponding charges will be filed against them in court.

Marikina cops caught in NBI, PDEA clash

THE MARIKINA Police appear to be caught between two feuding giants—the National Bureau of Investigation and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency.

Neither the NBI nor the PDEA seemed to want to cooperate in the investigation of the shooting of Marvin Matamis, a rookie NBI agent, on Nov. 22, Marikina investigators yesterday said.

Insp. Antonio Cruz of the city police said they would formally ask NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco to allow Matamis to file a complaint against the PDEA men so the case could move on.

He said the PDEA has also sent an internal affairs service officer to look into the "administrative aspect" of the case.

But like the NBI agents, the Marikina lawmen couldn't squeeze any information from him about his colleagues, Cruz said.

PDEA agents P03 Sherwin Bulan and P03 Norman Jesus last week surrendered to the police and admitted that they shot the NBI rookie. *Luige del Puerto*

Police seize shabu worth P6M in Malate bust

POLICE on Saturday seized about P6 million worth of shabu from an alleged drug dealer in Manila.

Supt. Marcelino Pedrozo Jr. said members of the Western Police District's Special Operations Group arrested Jeffrey Andripa, 25, of Barangay Sun Valley, Parañaque City, in a buy-bust operation on Remedios Street, in Malate, at around 7 p.m. Andripa was caught with three kilos of shabu placed in sealed plastic bags.

Pedrozo said Andripa tried to make a run for it, speeding away on board a black Toyota Exsior (HCY 888), but lawmen cornered the suspect on Remedios Street.

Andripa had been under surveillance for two weeks, according to Pedrozo. *Tarra Quismundo*

Sale of mental health land set by government

MENTAL anguish is expected to deepen after the government set the bidding date for the land on which the National Center for Mental Health (NCMH) stands.

Despite protests by NCMH personnel and other health workers, Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit said bids for Parcel 2 of the 100-hectare Welfareville compound in Mandaluyong would be held on Jan. 5.

Parcel 2 covers 29-hectares on the west side of Welfareville, where the Department of Transportation and Communication, Department of Health-National Capital Region, Commission on Population, and some 18,000 squatters are located.

The bidding for Parcel 1, which covers the remaining 71 hectares where the NCMH and the Correctional Institute for Women stand, will be held a week later on Jan. 12.

Protesters are saying that the sale of the hospital land would cause the displacement of 2,000 employees and 4,000 in-patients. *Blanche Rivera*

Water cutoff in Malabon

BARANGAY Concepcion and Ibaba in Malabon will have no water for 7 hours starting 10 p.m., Dec. 3, until 5 a.m. of the following day.

A portion of Barangay San Agustin will also experience low water pressure.

Affected customers may call Maynilad hotline 1626 for the water-rationing schedule.

UP PDE reunion

ALUMNI of the Program in Development Economics of the University of the Philippines School of Economics will hold its 5th Annual Reunion dubbed as PDE: Yesterday Once More on Dec. 5, at 2:00 pm at the UPSE Library Building.

For details, call the UP-PDE at 920-5481 and 927-9686 to 92 c/o Rose or any PDE alumni officer.

Rodeo action

WILD rodeo action will unfold in Manila when the Department of Tourism launches the 1st National Rodeo Competition, one of the special events of Visit Philippines 2003, on Dec. 2 to 4 at the Quirino Grandstand.

A grand parade of participants is scheduled at 2 p.m. on opening day, followed by the competition proper at 3 p.m.

Ecija HS reunion

MEMBERS of Nueva Ecija South High School Class '69 will hold their 35th anniversary reunion in Gapan, Nueva Ecija, on April 24, 2004. For details, call Eugene Garcia at (0918) 912-7793, Nini Figueroa-Avellana (0917) 833-5449, Cecille Espinosa (0917) 837-8381, or Diana Padiernos-Tan (0920) 794-1300.

Sure, Ping could stop crime in 180 days!

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

PRESIDENTIAL aspirant Raul Roco was presumptuous when he said he and his supporters would storm Malacañang if he were cheated at the polls.

He made the statement when he declared his candidacy at the Folk Arts Theater Sunday. How sure is Roco that he's going to win?

* * *

At this point, it's anybody's ballgame.

Roco may be leading in the recent surveys, but between now and May 2004, many things are going to happen. Don't be too sure of yourself, Mr. Roco!

* * *

Apparently soft-soaping the voters, the former senator and education secretary said that Filipinos have such dignity and principles they could not be bought.

Aw, c'mon, Raul! How come we have nincompoops in Congress and the local governments? They could not have won if they didn't pay off voters. An undeserved compliment is an insult. Roco was being sarcastic with his listeners.

* * *

I agree 100 percent with Roco that there's a need to educate the Filipinos.

Voting for candidates on account of their popularity and money is a sign of lack or no education on the part of voters.

That's why we had a womanizer, gambler and drunkard occupying the Palace by the Pasig. The uneducated masses placed him there.

(Mea culpa. I also voted for Erap and endorsed his candidacy. What does that make of me?)

* * *

Because we have such ignorant and uneducated masses, the country might yet have an Erap "twin" installed in Malacañang.

Fernando Poe Jr., Erap's bosom friend, his friends and followers are now talking like he's sure to get the country's top post. They're now apportioning Cabinet positions among themselves.

Between Roco, who lost to Erap in the 1998 presidential election, and FPJ, who's Erap's Xerox copy, who do you think will win?

* * *

At the 29th Philippine Business Conference, a gathering of the country's top businessmen, Sen. Panfilo Lacson, who disclosed his platform along with Roco, promised to stop criminality in the first 180 days should he get elected. Ping Lacson can really stop crime but at what price?

When he was chief of Philippine National Police during the Erap administration, Ping Lacson and his Big Boss made a secret pact with the Kuratong Baleleng Gang. The gang was responsible for most of the bank robberies and kidnappings in Metro Manila before Erap.

* * *

In exchange for not engaging in bank heists and kidnappings, the gang was given a concession. It was allowed to smuggle in rice and sugar, with Ozamiz City, the gang's home base, as the port of entry.

That's why during Erap's watch, there were very few kidnappings and bank robberies in Metro Manila. The kidnappings and bank robberies were committed by other, not-so-well organized gangs in Metro Manila. And by the Abu Sayyaf in Mindanao.

The gangs that pulled off bank heists and kidnappings during Erap's time were moved by unseen hands. I can't tell you whose hands those were for fear of a libel suit.

* * *

Now, the Kuratong Baleleng is active again. That's because its secret pact with Erap and Lacson expired when both were booted out of office.

Now, ask Lacson how he could make such a big promise to stop big crimes in 180 days after he got elected President.

* * *

When a government makes deals with crime syndicates, it goes down to their level. The government itself becomes a crime syndicate.

That's what the Erap administration was. That was how Lacson ran the PNP. Ping Lacson ran it like the Mafia.

METROBRIEFS

Girl found dead

MYRA Fillomena, 7, was last seen on Saturday buying cigarettes for a neighbor in Malate, Manila. Yesterday, her body was found stuffed in a white sack. Police are now looking for pedicab driver Ryan Zaraso, 25, the man who allegedly asked Fillomena to buy cigarettes, according to witnesses. PO1 Jerico Jimenez said the girl appeared to have been strangled. He also said that the victim might have been raped. *Tarra Quismundo*

Boy crushed to death

A TEN-WHEEL truck yesterday lost its brakes and fell on 12-year-old John Kevin Salalima, in Western Bicutan, Taguig. Salalima, a grade six student, was with his grandmother Seneca Llamoso selling vegetables on C-5 road when truck driver George Romero, 32, lost control of his 20-ton vehicle and pinned the boy to the ground at around 7 a.m. Police said Llamoso was unharmed because she was walking ahead of Salalima. *Margaux Ortiz*

Back in prison

GARRY Sidro, 36, last June escaped from the Iwahig Penal Colony in Palawan to be with his girlfriend whom he had not seen for nine years. But when he found out that Marilou dela Torre already has a partner, Sidro allegedly threatened to kill her and her family if she refused to go back to him. Dela Torre, 37, filed a complaint with the Malabon police. Lawmen yesterday arrested Sidro, a convicted murderer, and put him back behind bars. *Edson Tandoc Jr.*

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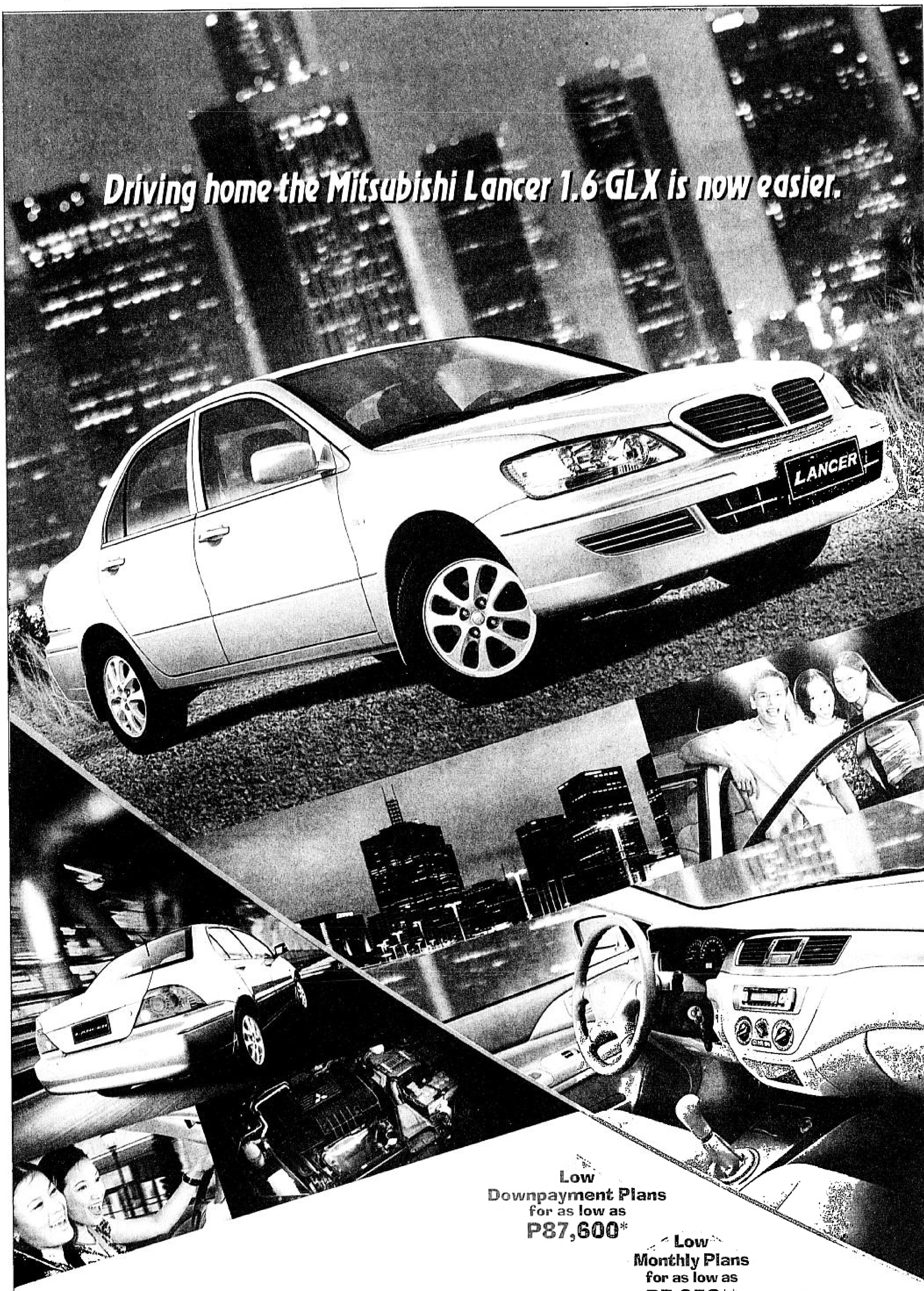
Caloocan fire chief urges DILG to allow firefighters to carry firearms



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MITSUBISHI MOTORS

By Edson Tandoc Jr.

HARASSED and even manhandled while responding to the call of duty, firemen in Caloocan City may soon get extra protection while fighting blazes in Metro Manila.

Chief Insp. Agapito Nacario, Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) chief in Caloocan City, is seeking the formation of an armed unit of firefighters to escort fellow firemen.

Nacario has written the Department of Interior and Local Government, as well as his superiors at the BFP, to suggest the formation of the BFP Organized Intervention Unit in all fire stations, particularly in Caloocan City.

Proposal

In his proposal, the intervention unit would be armed with guns to assist other firefighters, including volunteers, during operations.

The unit would also secure fire trucks and equipment from thieves and vandals.

Nagario came up with the proposal days after some residents mauled four fighters—two of them Filipino-Chinese volunteers—during a fire which razed a squatters' area in Bagong Barrio on Nov. 19.

The residents attacked after the firemen refused to hand over water hoses or hose down their houses first.

Victims

One of the firemen was stabbed in the incident.

Several fire trucks also lost nozzles and other equipment worth thousands of pesos in the looting that accompanied the confusion during the Bagong Barrio blaze.

The mauling forced firemen to temporarily pull out of the area which hampered operations for a few hours.

Asked if they could not just seek assistance from the police, Nacario said policemen already had much work to do.

Assistance

If the proposal is approved, the firemen who would form the intervention unit would undergo training and could also assist the police and the military in emergency situations.

"Aside from our firemen, volunteer firefighters are also exposed to danger. We also need to protect them," Nacario told the INQUIRER yesterday.

"I have lots of experience of unruly residents attacking us. We need that (unit) for our protection," firefighter Arvin David said.

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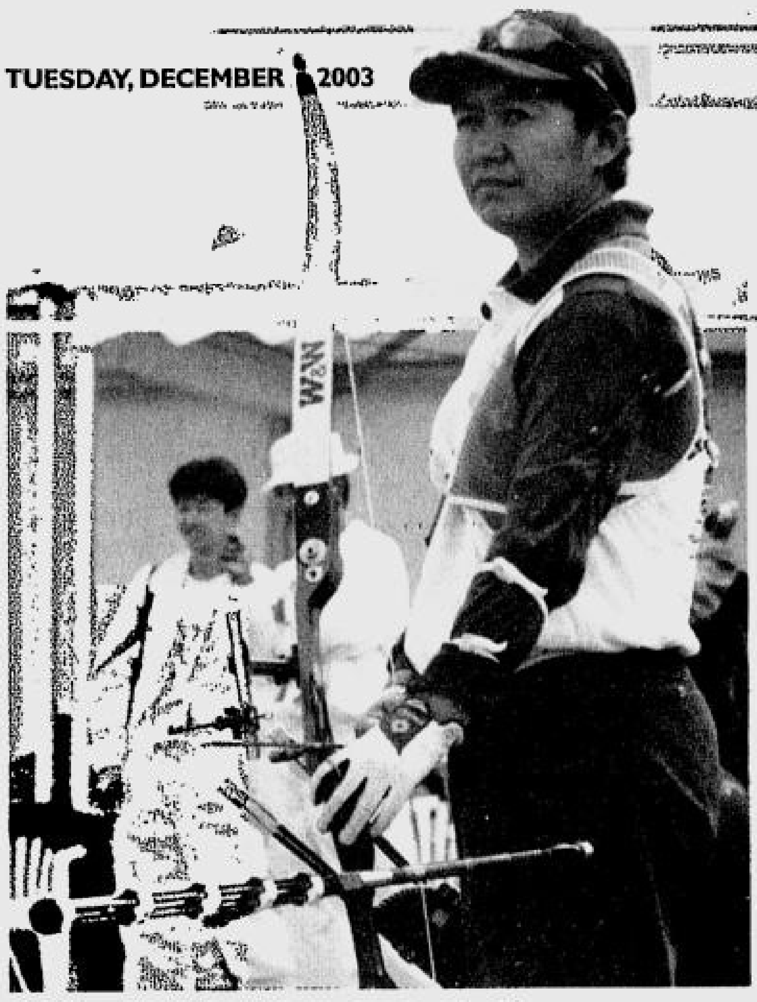
Blu Boys rip Taiwanese on Acuña's two-hitter, forges match with Japanese. See page A23



ARCHER Jennifer Chan is temporarily in third place. PDI PHOTO

SEA GAMES

Matan on target; water polo team falls

HANOI—Filipino archer Florante Matan Jr. got off to a roaring start in the 22nd Southeast Asian Games here yesterday by breaking the SEAG record in the 70-meter distance at the National Sports Training Center 1.

The 5-foot-7, 20-year-old carpenter's son from Catarman, Northern Samar, tallied 304 points to pace Indonesia's Kuswantoro (298), Malaysia's Muhamad Marbawi Sulaiman and Indonesia's Tawaungsoc, both with 296.

Matan bettered by two points the mark set by another Filipino, Nerickzon Fraginal, two years ago in Johor Baru, Malaysia.

Over at the National Aquatic Sports Complex, the Philippines played with great intensity and determination but dropped a 6-7 heartbreaker to defending water polo champion Singapore.

"*Malas lang* (Tough luck)," rued coach Rey Galang later.

Singaporean Lau Chok Yee knocked in the winning goal with only 43 seconds left in the tightly fought, exciting contest.

Meanwhile, the main bulk of the Philippine delegation here and in the seaport city of Ho Chi Minh is scheduled to arrive today.

A total of 385 officials and athletes from 14 sports will be coming in three separate flights—two via PAL, including a chartered plane, and one via Cathay Pacific.

Philippine Sports Commission chair Eric Buhain and commissioners Leon Montemayor and Michael Barredo head the 295-man group from swimming, diving, athletics, canoeing, gymnastics, karatedo, sepak takraw, shooting and wrestling who are due here today.

Deputy chief of mission Capt. Reynaldo Jaylo (ret.) leads the 90 officials and athletes from bad-

MATAN/ A22

Pacquiao US tax cheat after all

By Salven L. Lagumbay

MANNY Pacquiao, the current toast of Philippine sports, is a tax evader in the US.

The reigning IBF superbantam champion, who recently pulled off a titanic win over Mexican featherweight great Marco Antonio Barrera, owes the Internal Revenue Service some $350,000 in taxes from four previous fights in the United States.

An INQUIRER source said the amount does not include the taxes from Pacquiao's 11th round technical knockout win over Barrera, in which the Filipino was allocated a $700,000 purse by pay-per-view giant HBO.

Pedro Fernandez, a top investigative boxing journalist in the US, told the INQUIRER that the tax payment is the responsibility of Pacquiao's American promoter, Murad Muhammad, and his business manager, Rod Nazario.

It was Nazario who announced that Pacquiao was getting only $350,000 for the fight with Barrera. But he later admitted the actual purse was $700,000.

Pacquiao first fought in Las Vegas, Nevada, in June 2001 where he captured the IBF title from Lehlo Ledwaba via a sixth-round TKO.

He retained his title with a technical draw against Agapito Sanchez in San Francisco in November and kept it again with a second-round stoppage of Jorge Eliecer Julio in Memphis in June 2002. Pacquiao then halted Emmanuel Lucero in Los Angeles in his fourth title defense last July.

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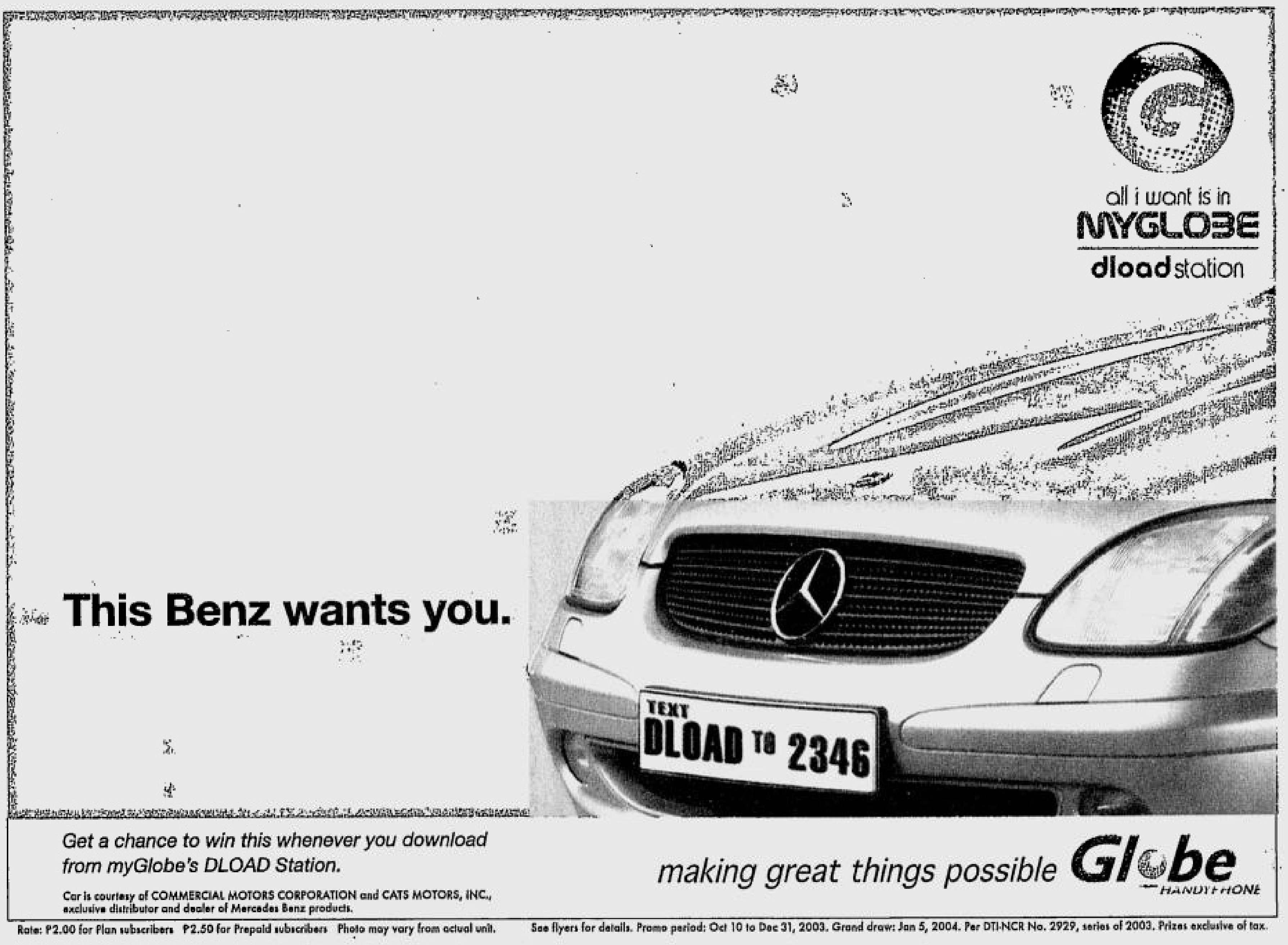
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Laranang fires ace; Baguio CC paces Flight D

By Al S. Mendoza

BAGUIO CITY—Inocencio Laranang scored a hole-in-one yesterday even as host Baguio Country Club emerged among the leaders in four divisions at the start of the 54th Fil-Am Golf Invitational.

Laranang, a doctor of medicine from Sustagen Premium II, fired his ace at the par 3 13th of BCC under an unusually nippy cold weather in this mountain city.

It was his third hole-in-one since he picked up the game 11 years ago. His previous aces were at No. 4 in 2001 and No. 6 in 2002, both at the nearby Camp John Hay.

He fired his ace yesterday using a Callaway three-wood and a Staff No. 3 ball in the company of Allan Lewis of Swagman Manila and Team Baguio II's Jonathan Vergara.

Laranang's ace, worth 5 points, earned him 23 points.

BCC bets had 104 points to pace Fil Division's Flight D at the BCC for the day's other significant story in the battle among teams entered in the lower divisions of C, D, E and F.

Chamorro led the Fil Division's Flight C with 92 at the 4,038-yard, par-61 Baguio Country Club, while Team Baguio I had 94 to pace the Am Division's Flight D and Sustagen Premium I had 87 for Am Division's C leadership at Camp John Hay.

Five players play for each team everyday, with the top four scores counting in the tournament presented by Smart Communications and sponsored by Northwest Arlines and Royal Caribbean International.

The top seeds in both Fil and Am Divisions, led by defending champions CAP-Southwoods in the Fil Division and Mizuno-DHL in the Am Division, will play starting tomorrow.

Giron Sagat led BCC with 28, followed by George Lawrence with 26, and Luis Sison and Fred Lacson 25 each in the series that is also supported, among others, by Eva Air, Pagcor, Wilson Sports, Heritage Park, San Miguel Corp., Caltex, Lamoiyan, Sinclair, Francis Calma and U-Bix Corporation.

Scorers for Chamorro were Leon Steven Guerrero (26), Dave Pejeran (24) and Nick Borja (23).

All 146 teams (73 each) from both Fil and Am Divisions play two rounds apiece at Baguio Country Club and Camp John Hay.

A total of 730 players from 73 teams, including 25 from abroad, are vying in the biggest edition of the event. *With a report from Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

LUCKY 13: Where Laranang holed his ace. TOOTS SOBERANO-PDI NORTHERN LUZON

Matan on target . . .

From page A21

minton, bodybuilding, basketball, chess, judo and tennis who are arriving in Ho Chih Minh.

"It's a good start for us," said archery team manager Ligaya Manalang, who hoped the good weather condition would continue until today's final qualifying round.

Two other Filipino archers—Marvin Cordero and Arnold Rojas—ranked sixth and seventh with 295 and 294 points, respectively.

Sydney Olympian Jennifer Chan compiled 639 points in the 70- and 60-meter events to check in third in the women's division, behind Malaysia's Mon Redee A/P Sut Txi (660) and Indonesia's Rina Dewi Puspita Sari (656).

Three other RP archers—Rachelle Anne Cabrel, Jasmin Figueroa and Joann C. Tabanag—finished eighth, 11th and 12th with 622, 613 and 612, respectively.

The women shoot in the 50- and 30-meter distances to determine the top 16 who will make it to the knockout round.

Matan and the other male campaigners were still vying in the 90-meter event at press time yesterday. They're also slated to vie in the 50- and 30-meter events today.

It was a remarkable water polo debut for the Filipinos, who were soundly beaten by the Singaporeans, 16-9, two years ago in the SEA Games in Kuala Lumpur.

The Filipinos try to bounce back in the six-team series today when they face Vietnam at 10:30 a.m.

Coach Galang hopes to beat the Vietnamese and stay on track for a medal. The Filipinos still have to face Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand, in that order.

Anthony's answer

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

THE 54TH Fil-Am Golf Invitational is no different from its previous 53 editions except that this year, the tournament, much envied for its unsullied prestige, is reaping the fruits of robust innovations introduced mainly by Anthony de Leon some years back.

The tournament was losing a bit of its luster until Anthony de Leon took over as acting manager of the Baguio Country Club in 1999. With his ascension, Anthony became the co-chair beginning in 1999 of the Fil-Am, undoubtedly the country's most admired amateur fun tournament held annually in the City of Pines. It was a position that became Anthony's vehicle to restoring the Fil-Am's old grandeur and gaiety.

"I had observed that the tournament was fast sliding into the pits," said Anthony, who, as a 24-year-old, became the youngest maitre d'hotel (restaurant manager) of the Baguio Country Club in 1989. "When I got my promotion in 1999, I immediately thought of ways to bring back the old glory of the Fil-Am."

First, he got the media back, long an effective ally of the Fil-Am that was, to the late Naning Ilusorio, a vital cog since the tournament's birth in 1950.

Second, he removed the seemingly growing snobbish stature of the Fil-Am by soliciting prizes both for the tournament winners and raffle giveaways.

Third, he got a professional management group to run the tournament's affairs during the actual competition, including a crew that specializes in computerized scoring and collating results.

"This year is really a cause for celebration," said Anthony, who, at age 38 a year ago, became the Country Club's youngest general manager. "The last three or four years that I had been deep into the affairs of the tournament, I feel glad that the innovations introduced are now producing wondrous results."

Anthony, of course, admits that the hardest part has always been the continued surge of teams wanting to join the Fil-Am. He said it pains him no end to turn down applicants.

"My joy in seeing a lot of teams wanting to join us has not waned," Anthony said, "but then, we can't help but refuse others since we will encounter major glitches once we overshoot our target. The ideal thing really is 60 teams. We have 73 teams now but then, that's the most that we can do. We felt sad turning away nine other teams and I hope they understand."

Anthony is optimistic he would soon find the answer, if not the solution, to this ever-nagging problem of an overflow crowd in the Fil-Am. In fact, he already has one formula in mind.

"We are now seriously considering holding a separate seniors division next year," he said. "With that, we could probably extend the Fil-Am to two weeks, giving us all the latitude for a hassle-free tournament insofar as late-finishing rounds are concerned. The plans are afoot and I hope we can work it out beginning, maybe, next May."

My advice, Anthony?

Go for it. When the product is good, there's no way but go.

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SPORTSWATCH

Tams assert UAAP mastery, rip Knights

THE FAR Eastern Tams again stressed the obvious yesterday. The reigning UAAP champions stamped their class over their NCAA counterparts, blasting the Letran Knights, 68-54, yesterday in Big Eight action of the Champions' League at the Adamson gym. With the win, FEU set up a Final Four clash with top favorite St. Francis of Assisi, a rematch of last year's Big Eight where the Tamaraws stunned the Doves. So dominant were the Tamaraws that the closest the Knights could get was at 14-22, the score at the end of first quarter. "I think we caught them in an off-day," said winning coach Koy Banal. Letran's loss left San Sebastian as the only NCAA team in the running. The last of the Final Four aspirants—Ateneo and Holy Cross of Davao—are playing as of press time with the winner facing the waiting Stags.

Scores:

FEU 68—Isip 17, Santos 13, Chan 10, Miranda 9, Rizada 6, Sinco 5, Jones 4, Gadiane 3, Razon 1, Yabut 0, Barcellano 0.

LETRAN 54—Enrile 13, Piñera 9, Santos 9, Aldave 8, Aban 5, Bautista 3, Anabo 2, Reyes 2, Reposar 2, Realista 1, Rodriguez 0.

Quarters: 22-14, 45-29; 62-38, 68-54.

Arcilla reaffirms No. I ranking

JOHNNY Arcilla lived up to his billing as the country's No. 1 player last Sunday by winning the P400,000 Cebuana Lhuillier Tennis Masters Cup at the Manila Polo Club. Playing true to form, the 23-year-old Arcilla breezed past Joseph Victorino, 6-2, 6-2, for his 10th singles title this year. "I'm happy to win again," said Arcilla, whose nine-title streak was snapped last week in the PCA Open finals. "I was very disappointed after losing to Korean Chung Hee-Seok in the PCA final. I told myself that I have to regain my confidence and do my best to win the Masters leg," said Arcilla, who swept the first three legs of the P1-million Circuit. Arcilla, a member of the Philippine Air Force, earned a total of P160,000, including the Masters leg top purse worth P70,000.

FEU, UST shuttlers forge title clash

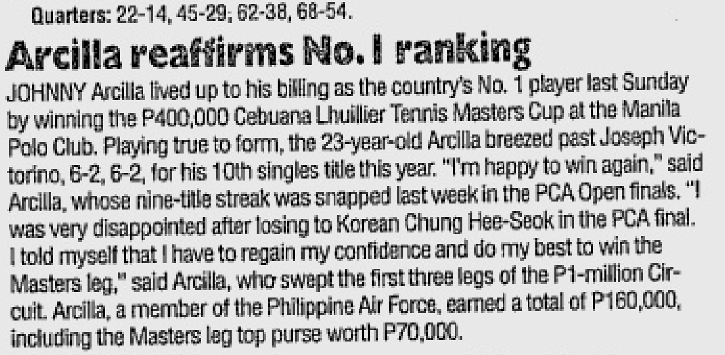
FAR Eastern University and University of Santo Tomas downed separate rivals last Sunday to advance to the finals of the Philippine Badminton Tournaments Intercollegiate Cup at the Olympic Badminton Center in Libis, Quezon City. The Tamaraws banked the men's doubles team of Wilson Frias and Mark Alvin Natividad to beat La Salle, 3-2. The Growling Tigers won the crucial men's doubles and mixed doubles to conquer University of the Philippines, 3-2.

Abas is rightful Off-Roader awardee

ORGANIZERS of the 2003 Delo Sports 4x4 National Extreme series the other day rectified a glitch in the tabulation of the results for the Off-Roader of the Year award and announced the selection of Cagayan de Oro Off-Roaders Club's Robert Abas as the rightful awardee. Abas garnered 41 points in the final round of the four-leg national series to hike his total to 118 points, seven points ahead of second placer—Suzuki Club's Larry Alberto. Abas' teammate Toten Macmang, who was earlier wrongfully named Off-Roader of the Year, placed third with 109 points. "We are doing this to preserve the dignity of the sport," said Dexter Tang, secretary general of the National Association of Filipino Off-Roaders and official of the host Land Cruiser Club of the Philippines. Sonee Pili of the organizing Sis@events said the last leg of the series, held at the Marikina River Banks, was lost in the euphoria of the proceedings and tabulation of winners.

Sta. Ana cockpit 3-cock derby today

CASH prizes totaling P150,000 await the winners of a 3-cock derby today at the Sta. Ana Cockpit Arena (next to Sta. Ana Park on A.P. Reyes Avenue) in Makati City. Action starts at 7 p.m. The event, to be hosted by Elmer Felix, has an entry fee of P5,500, with a minimum bet of P5,500. Entries must be submitted before 12 noon and interested parties may call 898-3474 and 898-3475. Pit manager Eric dela Rosa also announced the holding of the "Fastest Kill Ulutan" this Saturday. The total guaranteed prize is P150,000, with a registration fee of P1,100. Meanwhile, the first-ever National Press Club Challenge 3-Cock derby unfolds on Dec. 15. At stake is a cash prize of P200,000. Entry fee is P5,500.



RP 12 Category winners Eric Camarillo and Alex Morales (1st and 2nd from left) of Tuazon Racing School stand next to their Ford Lynx after ruling the recent Petron Rally Pilipinas. With them are runners-up Melissa Santiago (3rd from left) and Jay Navarro of Team DMF.

Blu Boys blank Taiwanese

By Dennis U. Eroa

PITCHER Sonny Boy Acuña spun a two-hitter as the Philippines shellacked Chinese-Taipei, 5-0, yesterday and swept Group B of the 7th Asian Softball Championship before a delirious crowd at the Rizal Memorial ballpark.

The 29-year-old Acuña showed no jitters for a first-timer as he struck out 10 batters to power the Blu Boys to a third straight win.

"The boys played very solid," said former baseball great and now coach Reynaldo "Baby" Manzanares of the Blu Boys, who secured one of three slots reserved for Asia in the World Championship slated January in New Zealand.

"The team played great. But our players must sustain their level of play against Japan," said Manila Rep. Harry Angping, president of the Amateur Softball Association of the Philippines.

A product of softball- and baseball-crazy Zamboanga, Acuña mesmerized the Taiwanese with his variety of pitches.

He came within an out of a rare no-hitter in the 7th but Wang Kuang-shih and Huang Wen-ming came up with back-to-back singles.

The Philippines will meet Japan at 3 p.m. today, with the winner advancing to the finals. Japan beat the Philippines in the last Asian championship.

The Japanese swept Group A after spanking Hong Kong-China, 7-0.

Manzanares said he's inclined to use lefty Mark Rae Ramirez against Japan.

"From the looks of it, the Japanese are having a hard time going up against a lefty," said Manzanares.

Earlier, India downed Iran, 8-1, and Thailand edged Indonesia, 5-4.

STANDINGS—**GROUP A:** Japan 3-0, HK-China 2-1, Thailand 1-2, Indonesia 0-3; **GROUP B:** Philippines 3-0, Chinese-Taipei 2-1, India 1-2, Iran 0-3.

25 in row for Lakers

LOS ANGELES— Shaquille O'Neal scored 18 of his 23 points in the second half and Karl Malone added 11 points and 15 rebounds Sunday as the Lakers set a Los Angeles-era record by winning their 25th straight home game, 99-77 over the Indiana Pacers. In the only other NBA game, Sacramento beat New Jersey, 105-92. *AFP*

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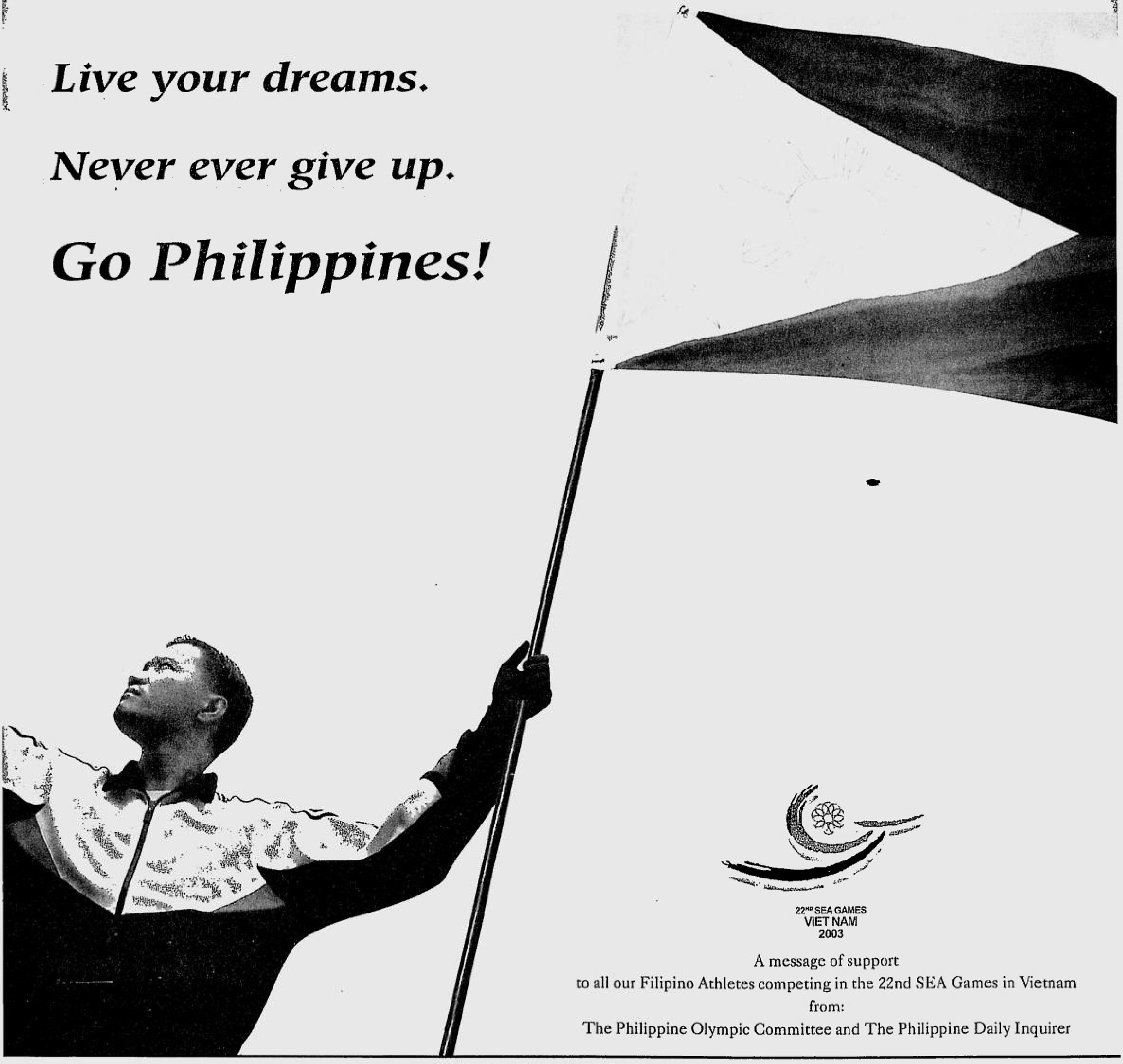
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3 MASTER AND COMMANDER 10:10, 1:10, 4:10, 7:10, 10:00
6 MATRIX REVOLUTIONS 10:50, 1:35, 5:20, 7:05, 9:50
7 AKO IKAW SIYA 11:00, 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00
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6 LOONEY TUNES - 11:00, 1:10, 3:20, 5:30, 7:40, 9:50
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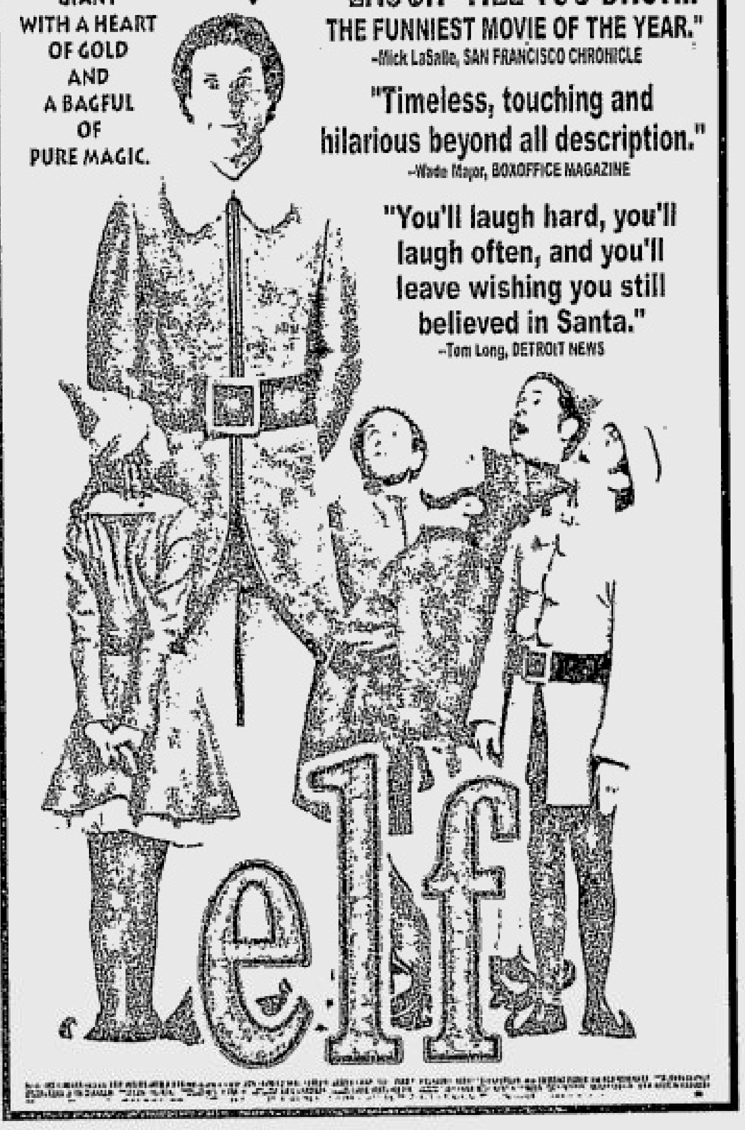

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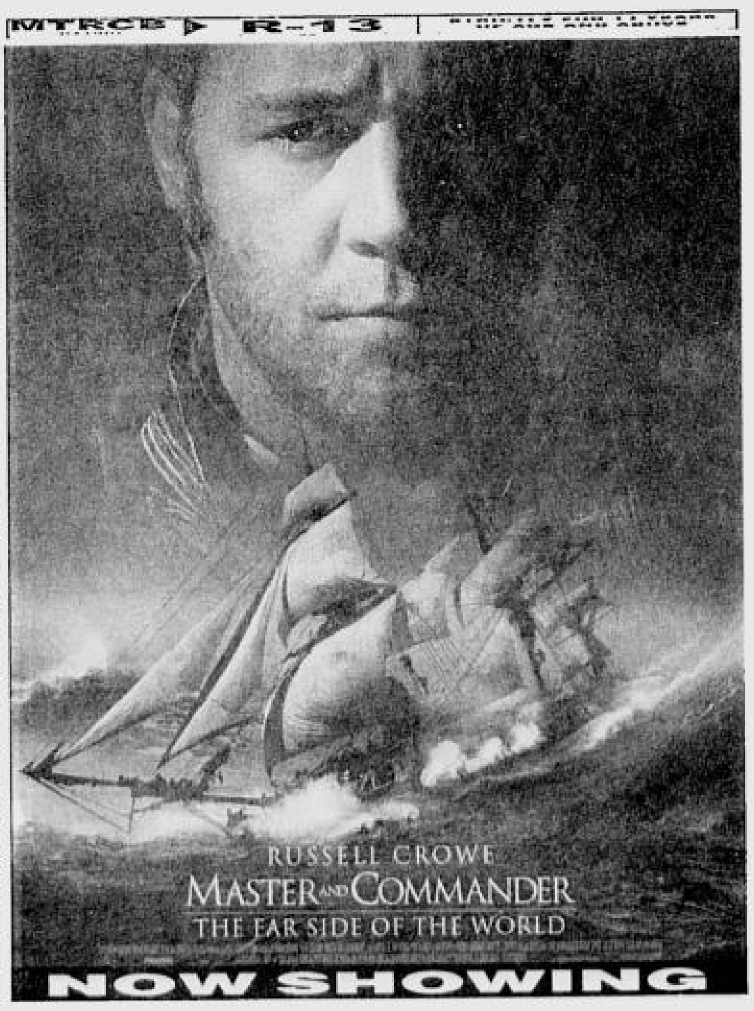

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Exuberant welcome for Mandy Moore

From page A28

on range from PDA to PMS, from meeting the girls' parents to women coping with men's vulgarities, and from jealousy to love.

Marvel Julian plays himself, and his "girlfriends" are portrayed by **Ira Eigenmann** as Anna, the sweet college Kikay; **Mika Callanta** as J, the eccentric college girl; and **Michelle Cuneta** as Tanya, the career girl. Marvel's buddies are **Bidz de la Cruz** as himself, and **Reena David** as Jenny.

CCP art auction

ON DEC. 3, the CCP is holding an art auction to raise funds for its important cultural projects. Registration and cocktails at the Main Theater lobby are at 5:30 p.m. At 6:30 p.m., CCP president **Nestor O. Jardin** will welcome the guests, and auctioneers **Boy Abunda** and **Ces Drilon** will be introduced.

The first batch of artworks to be auctioned off includes works by **Aviado, Endaya, Fajardo, Garibay, Arrogante, Zaballero, Feleo, Bitanga, Dela Cruz, Pacquing, Borlongan, Nuyda, Isidro, Baldemor, Victor, Parial** and **Veneracion.**

The second batch, to be auctioned off at 8 p.m., adds works by **Roces, Baens Santos, Orlina, Liongoren, Santos, Carating, Albor, Cosio, Bencab** and **Vinluan.**

Batch 3-A (9:30 p.m.): works by National Artists **Joya, Abueva** and **Luz.**

Batch 3-B (10 p.m.): Luz, Abueva and **Juan Luna.** At 10:20 p.m., **Martin Lopez** will deliver the closing remarks.

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MASTER AND COMMANDER PG13 1:10, 4:00, 6:50, 9:40	LOONEY TUNES GP 12:00, 2:25, 4:50, 7:20, 9:50	LOONEY TUNES GP 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, 9:40

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CINEMA-5 (DTS)	MR SUAVE
CINEMA-6	WRONG TURN
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CINEMA-9 (DTS)	MASTER AND COMMANDER
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	LOONEY TUNES
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2 CHAVIT	2 SCARY MOVIE 3	2 THE GRUDGE 12:25 2:35 4:45 6:55 9:00	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 2 LOONEY TUNES 1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:00 11:00	2 SCARY MOVIE 3
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Melanie: Lito still thrilled every time he sees me

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

MELANIE Marquez was in a playful mood when I asked her about her ex-lover, Pampanga Gov. **Lito Lapid.**

Doesn't her husband get jealous at all considering how colorful her past was?

She said, "My husband has all the good qualities of all the men I've loved before combined, so he has no reason to be jealous. But if I did not meet him, I guess I would have ended up with Lito. He was my first love. *Lahat ng* first *sa kanya ko na*-experience!

"Surprisingly, our son **Manuelito** (now studying in Nevada) did not take after him nor after the Marquez side when it comes to having many girls. After his first heartbreak with his high school girlfriend, *na*-trauma *na si* Manuelito. It's always nice when I see Lito, *pero aminin man niya o hindi, kinikilig pa siya* every time he sees me."

And then she laughed.

Some people may poke fun at Melanie for her booboos, but I'd rather talk to someone like her who may be grammatically wrong sometimes but is sincere, than talk to somebody who's articulate yet is lying through her teeth."

Personal

Super-duper thanks to Universal Records' well-loved lady boss, *Tita* **Bella Tan**, for playing Santa Claus to my sis **Clara** and daughter **Bianchi** even when it ain't Christmas yet.

Happy 30th Foundation Day to Pines City National High School headed by their esteemed principal, Dr. **Rachel Bugtong.**

Happy birthday to someone I can never really unlove—**Dukie V!**

For feedback, e-mail friends_at_dsquare@yahoo.com or dollyanne@truefaith-band.com

MARQUEZ. She had "firsts" with him.

Ai Ai nearly steals show from ...

From page A28

sentation of ABS-CBN and also featured performances by the network's talents including Ai Ai, The Hunks, Vina Morales, Bayani Agbayani and Claudine Barretto.

The new artists of the network's Star Records—Josh Santana, Divo Bayer, King and Michelle Ealde—had a special number.

Zhou, Yan and ASOS were actually the concert's special guests. They performed three songs each, with ASOS singing "Qing Fei Dei Yi," the theme of "Meteor Garden."

The Xu sisters were also in Manila last Sept. 13 to perform with the other two F4 members, Ken Zhu and Vanness Wu, at "The Event" at the Philsports football field in Pasig City. The sisters spoke to the audience in halting English, saying they missed the Filipinos.

Yan and Zhou spoke through an interpreter.

The Taiwanese pop stars were billeted at the Peninsula Manila hotel in Makati and were flown by chopper to the Global City about 5 p.m. They were taken to a holding room at the Pacific Place condominium where they stayed with ABS-CBN executives until it was time for their concert appearance a little past 9 p.m.

During September's "The Event, " eight people were injured and many others lost their cell phones to snatchers and pickpockets. In contrast, "Happy 50 TV" went on smoothly.

Medical stations were set up around the concert site, and although 37 people were reported to have required medical attention, all were minor cases such as complaints of headache, fever and hypertension. Most of the incidents happened before the concert.

According to the Police Command Precinct 7, a substation of the Taguig police, about 300 officers from different districts were deployed in the concert scene, plus about 300 security marshals.

Container vans, placed end to end to enclose the concert site, gave added security and ensured that overenthusiastic fans would not be able to tear down the fence, like what happened during "The Event."

People started coming to the concert site as early as 8 a.m. and waited under the sun for hours. The gates opened at noon and the show began at 8 p.m., after a showing of Ai Ai's hit movie, "Tanging Ina."

By 4 p.m., tickets for all sections were still available at the two TicketWorld booths outside the venue, which could accommodate up to 30,000 people.

"Maybe people were afraid the crowd would become unruly," Jorell Patricio, a student and F4 fan, said in Filipino. "At the same time, more foreign artists are coming to Manila."

Enterprising people peddled F4 posters and miniatures outside the gates. Richard Lanot and two of his friends made Jerry Yan, Vic Zhou and "Love Ko Dao" shirts and sold them for P150 each, starting at 8 a.m.

The other foreign acts expected to perform in Manila include Ashanti, Michael Buble and Incubus.

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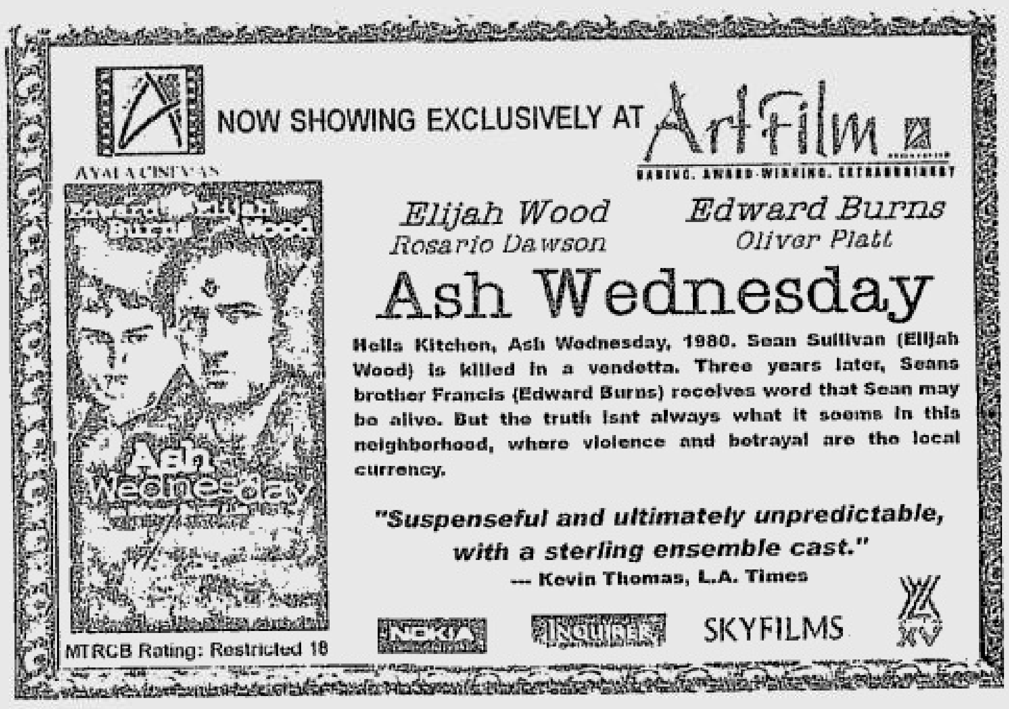

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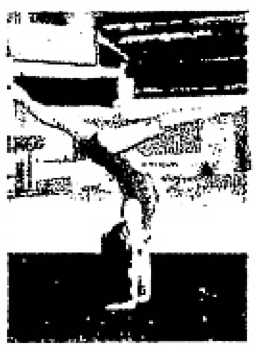
GO FOR GOLD, TEAM PHILIPPINES!

The quest for the prized gold medal continues as the 22nd Southeast Asian (SEA) Games kicks off in Vietnam this year.

MILO, the official energy drink of the SEA Games, awaits and joins the entire country with bated breath as members of Team Philippines start their battles in their respective disciplines en route to that prized gold mint that is equated not only to fame and greatness but glory as well.

The December edition of the biennial meet provides the perfect avenue for our local sporting heroes to strut their stuff and pit their skills against some of Southeast Asia's bests.

The long hours spent in tedious training and intense preparation will be finally put into test, and the SEA Games, without a doubt, is the most-important event in the 2003 sporting calendar.



MILO, together with the rest of the country, supports Team Philippines as it renews its crusade in bringing home the gold.

It is no secret that in any sporting event, it takes more than effort to succeed and excel. Hence, the Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) and the Philippine Olympic Committee (POC) have joined hands in supporting the athletes every step of the way.

The support comes in various forms -- from issuing sports equipment that would enhance their training, to fielding them off in international tourneys that would gauge the level of their skill. Local sports officials also lead the supporting cast when the SEA Games finally opens shop, goading and cheering the Philippine delegation towards the goal, of which is a gold medal.

This time, a triumvirate of sorts is formed when MILO joins the partnership and gives that extra effort to inspire and motivate the SEA Games' cast.

An athlete should polish his potential to bring out the skill that he needs to excel in the discipline that he has chosen. For this he needs his coach. He needs to undergo rigorous training and preparation and needs a diet suitable to the demands of his body. A well-balanced diet is without a doubt, the fuel that his body needs to drive him towards the end goal of any athlete, which is excellence.

MILO is without a doubt, the right source of energy to jumpstart the road towards greatness. It has proven itself a constant companion of some of the country's sports icons, the likes of Lydia de Vega-Mercado and Christine Jacob-Sandejas, in their early beginnings and athletes who have carved their niche in their respective fields.

Swimming's Lisa Danila and tennis ace Johnny Arcilla are but some of the present batch of sports superstars who had their early start with MILO, together with budding taekwondo stars, Japoy Lizardo and Roshelle Lavalan.

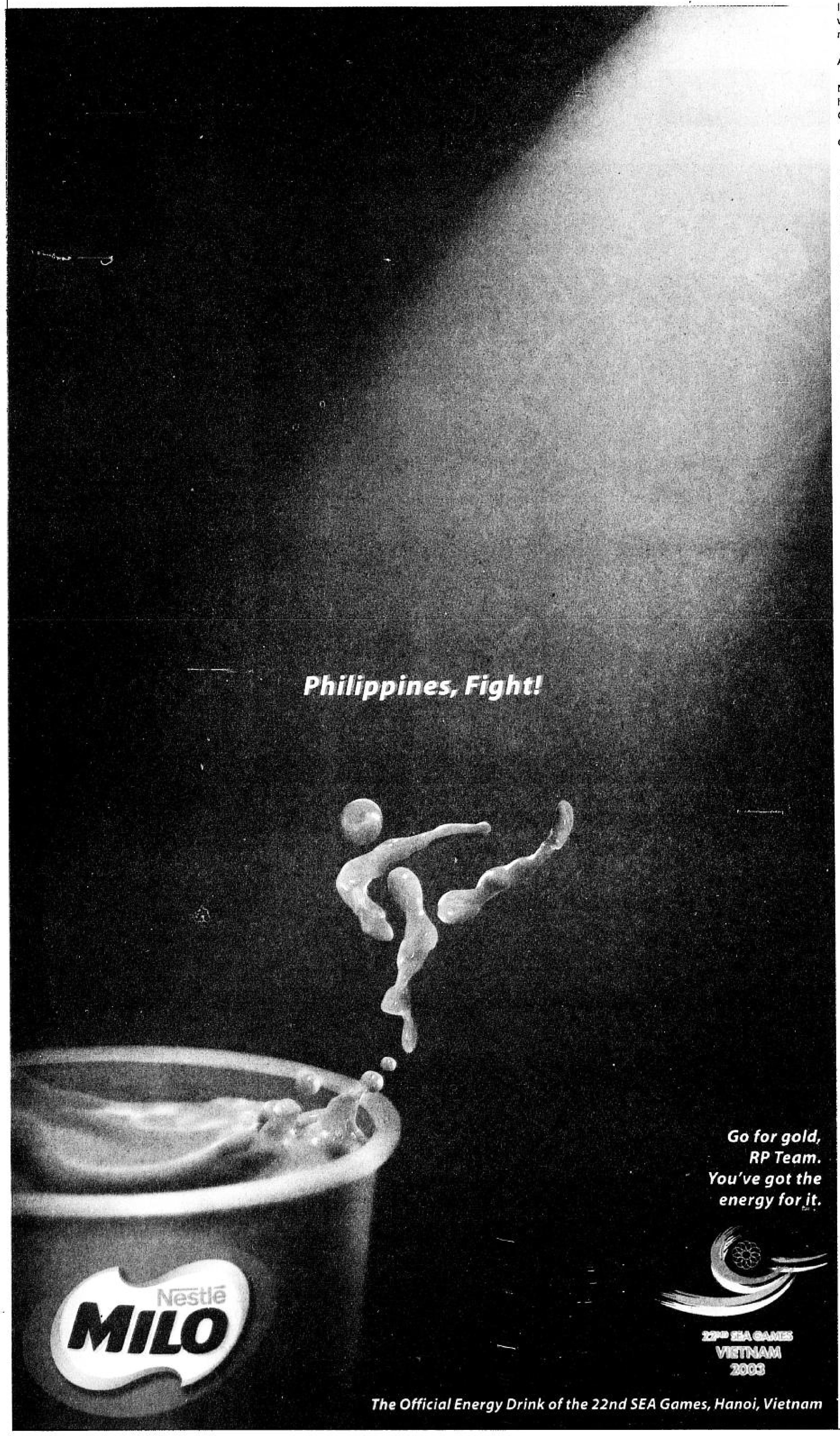
Perhaps, no other brand has been a steadfast supporter of local sports -- its grassroots and mass-based programs -- other than MILO.

It has been a partner of athletes in their training, with its mineral components providing them the right materials that their body needs.

After all, the best only needs the best for a partner.

MILO is one with the nation in sending off these six hundred fiftyeight athletes to the Vietnam SEA Games.

Go for Gold, Team Philippines! Mabuhay kayo!



A CALL FOR UNITY AND SUPPORT FOR THE TEAM PHILIPPINES TO THE 22ND SEA GAMES

Once again, our Team Philippines will vie for the country's honor and pride in the 22nd Southeast Asian (SEA) Games in Vietnam next month.

Our athletes -- buoyed by the strong support given by Her Excellency President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, the First Gentleman Foundation and the private sector -- are now ready to banner our national colors high.

Like what Manny Pacquiao, C.J. Suarez, and Dorothy Delasin's recent triumphant victories, the Filipino nation's spirit for excellence and persevering aspiration for brilliance in the international field will again be showcased and championed by our own Team Philippines.

Their victories proved that Filipino athletes have what it takes to be world-class. More than anything else, their victories have catapulted our nation to a new dawn of peace and unity.

For behind the struggle of our national athletes lies the similar struggle of the Filipino nation for worldwide honor, respect, and recognition.

Courage. Determination. Patriotism. These are indeed the characters that mold the spirit of the Filipino athletes, the characters that will define the momentum and success of the Team Philippines' campaign in the SEA Games.

Together with the whole nation, let us unite and display our flag to every home as we pray and cheer for the victory of our Filipino athletes.

Mabuhay ang Atletang Pilipino!

Maraming Salamat sa Tiwala!

Maraming Salamat sa Paniniwala!

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ENTERTAINMENT

E-mail: pr_entertainment@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Louie C. Camino

Ai Ai nearly steals show from 'Meteor' stars

By Carmela Teresa Almonte

AI AI de las Alas' outfits, complete with gigantic headdresses, nearly upstaged Taiwanese stars Vic Zhou, Jerry Yan and sisters Dee and Barbie Xu, also known as the duo ASOS, at the "Happy 50 TV" concert at the Bonifacio Global City open field last Saturday.

Ai Ai, who had a total of seven costume changes throughout the show, made the audience and the "Meteor Garden" stars laugh when she told Yan, "My daughter likes you so much. Will you be the father of my children?"

Yan plays Dao Ming Si in the very popular "Meteor Garden," shown on week nights on ABS-CBN.

Ai Ai earlier told Zhou, who plays Hua Zei Lei in the hit chinovela, that she was his future wife.

She also got hugs and kisses from the two members of the group F4, drawing envious screams from the crowd.

The concert was the 50th anniversary pre-

AI AI/ A26

'QUEEN' DE LAS ALAS tells Zhou (above) that she is his "future wife." To Yan, she says, "Will you be the father of my children?"

Exuberant welcome for Mandy Moore

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

MARIAH Carey made a big impression during her recent performing visit here, but **Mandy Moore** also scored with her sincere appreciation of the exuberant welcome that local music fans accorded her.

Mandy may not possess as spectacular a singing voice as Mariah, but she captivated viewers here with her honesty. She gamely admitted that her recent Manila concert was the biggest she's had in her career thus far.

"I never expected this outpouring of emotion and excitement," she exclaimed. "I felt so welcomed, from the time I arrived, to even after the show ended. I definitely want to come back for other shows. Maybe then I can really get to see your country!"

In another television interview, Mandy candidly admitted that Fil-Am singer-actor **Billy Crawford** was "one of my first boyfriends." Their relationship lasted only a few months, but Mandy said she still cherished it. And she enthusiastically praised Billy for his talent, and predicted a bright future for him as a stellar singing and acting talent.

Aside from her simplicity and honesty, Mandy charmed local fans with her *mestiza* looks, which made it easy for them to empathize with her. And Mandy's TV spot for the Penshoppe line of clothes further strengthened her connection with the local scene.

Of course, her 5'10" height would make it difficult to find a Pinoy leading man for her, but we hope that Mandy can make a movie here, to strengthen her local links even further.

That may have to wait a while, though, because Mandy's acting career in Hollywood is keeping her quite busy. Her latest film, which casts her as the daughter of the US president, will be released here shortly.

Incidentally, Mandy had a little run-in with local TV hosts when she guested on a TV show here before she left. One of them tried to be funny by asking her if her father was Roger Moore, and Mandy sweetly but candidly slapped him down with the perfect squelch: "Oh, please, don't be silly."

Yes, please don't.

'Butterflies Are Free'

PRISCILLA Almeda, Joel Trinidad, Richard Signey and **Linda Lupton** make up the cast of Dramatic Personae's staging of **Leonard Gershe's** Tony Award-winning romantic comedy, "Butterflies Are Free," at the Republic of Malate at 9 p.m. on Dec. 12, 13, 19 and 20.

In the play directed by **Lito Casaje**, a blind young man leaves home, and his doting mother follows him down the perilous streets of lower eastside New York. He meets a free-spirited, 19-year-old stage actress who changes his sullen outlook on life, and they eventually fall in love. Call 722-4205.

'Ang Boyfriend Ko'

STUDIO 23's "new reality sitcom" show, "Ang Boyfriend Ko," (Thursdays, 7:30 p.m.), revolves around a bachelor, Marvel, who's trying to juggle three relationships at the same time without getting busted. Topics touched

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Gov't to tap foreign loan market anew

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE MACAPAGAL administration is considering another foreign borrowing possibly in January to complete the government's $1.8-billion financing requirement for 2004, according to the Department of Finance.

The government needs to raise $800 million of its requirement for next year after successfully prefunding $1 billion of the amount.

"We could take advantage of the market and borrow at a favorable rate. The spreads remain good so we are closely watching the market," said Finance Undersecretary Juanita Amatong, who was tapped by Malacañang to replace resigned Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho.

INQUIRER sources said new offers for the government to tap the foreign market by January had been submitted to the DOF. The cash-strapped National Power Corp. is also poised to issue new debt instruments to finance its $1.2-billion requirement for next year.

Amatong said any borrowing would have to be long term, similar to the government's earlier transactions where it raised $1.05 billion from the 10-year and 22-year bond market in October.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura said he welcomed any foreign borrowing by the national government, saying that it would be better for the DOF to raise its remaining requirements before the May presidential polls.

"The national government has a blanket authority to tap the foreign markets anytime. We have approved their foreign borrowings in principle," the BSP governor said.

But market players said spreads on Philippine bond issues have widened by more than 50 basis points since Camacho announced his resignation on Nov. 21.

The spread represents the risk premium that investors seek for placing their money in Philippine bonds.

Days later, spreads went up a few notches more following the announcement of action star Fernando Poe Jr. that he would run in the May presidential polls. That was on the same day that Moody's Investors Service warned of an impending credit rating downgrade.

Camacho had wanted to raise the government's remaining requirement after the May elections but sources said the strategy could easily change under Amatong's leadership.

On top of political jitters that are making Philippine borrowings more expensive, the rate on US treasuries had been going up as well. Investment banks believed that US treasury rates would continue to go up next year.

The government also said it would continue to tap the local market for funds. It is currently selling three-year retail treasury bonds where it aims to raise at least P30 billion. The public offering for the RTBs would end today.

Meantime, Napocor said yesterday it planned to issue $250 million in bonds in the first quarter of 2004 to fund its operations and pay back debt.

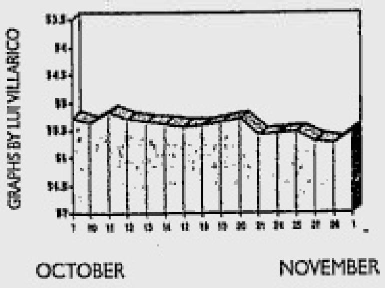
Napocor finance manager Lorna Dy told reporters that the firm, which owns most of the country's power plants, was in talks with investment firm ING on issuing the bonds.

"There's a $250-million bond issuance in the offing," Dy said, adding details of the plan would be finalized this week.

Other officials said Napocor has yet to firm up how much it needed next year after raising $1.2 billion this year to fund its operations and pay maturing debt. *With a report from Reuters*

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



PESO-DOLLAR RATE

₱ 55.52 = $ 1

As of 5 p.m., Dec. 01, 2003

¥ 109.21 = $ 1

As of 5 p.m., Dec. 01, 2003

GOLD: $396.70-397.20

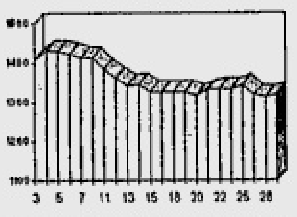
per ounce Hong Kong, Dec. 01, 2003

December 1, 2003 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.833541719	1.000000	55.719000
Japan	Yen	0.007604	0.009122	0.508300
United Kingdom	Pound	1.436192	1.723000	96.003800
Hongkong	Dollar	0.107349	0.128786	7.175800
Switzerland	Franc	0.645856	0.774833	43.172900
Canada	Dollar	0.64163	0.769764	42.890500
Singapore	Dollar	0.483773	0.580363	32.338400
Australia	Dollar	0.602967	0.723380	40.306000
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.211044	2.652590	147.799700
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.222278	0.266667	14.858400
Brunei	Dollar	0.482374	0.578704	32.244800
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000098	0.000118	0.006600
Thailand	Baht	0.020891	0.025063	1.396500
UA E	Dirham	0.226956	0.272279	15.171100
Euro	Euro	1	1.199700	66.846100
Argentina	Peso	0.278776	0.334448	18.635100
Brazil	REAL	0.282748	0.339213	18.900600
Denmark	Kroner	0.134394	0.161233	8.983700
India	Rupee	0.018231	0.021872	1.218700
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.219382	0.263193	14.664900
Mexico	New Peso	0.073297	0.087935	4.899700
New Zealand	Dollar	0.532478	0.638814	35.594100
Norway	Kroner	0.122306	0.146731	8.175700
Pakistan	Rupee	0.014871	0.017841	0.994100
South Africa	Rand	0.131266	0.157480	8.774600
Korea	Won	0.000694	0.000832	0.046400
Sweden	Kroner	0.110437	0.132491	7.382300
Syria	Pound	0.016185	0.019417	1.081900
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024444	0.029326	1.634000
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000523	0.000627	0.034900

STOCK MARKET

Shares close 0.56% higher

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B6)

SHARE prices closed 0.56 percent higher yesterday as select stocks staged a technical bounce after recent declines and as the peso steadied, dealers said.

They said sentiment improved on the peso's recovery after hitting an all-time low of 55.85 against the US dollar on Thursday against a backdrop of increasing political tensions ahead of next year's presidential elections.

At the same time, gains in Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) and parent First Philippine Holdings following regulatory approval for a Meralco rate increase also gave the market a boost.

However, despite the positive start for the week, dealers said the sustainability of the gains remained uncertain as investors would continue to factor in political uncertainties in the run-up to the May presidential polls.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index added 7.39 points to 1,321.26, having traded between 1,314.43 and 1,329.60.

Gainers led losers 27 to 17, while 40 stocks were unchanged.

The all-shares index was up 7.34 points at 843.69 while the commercial-industrial index was up 12.13 at 1,974.24.

Property was down 3.10 at 540.35, while mining rose 10.59 at 1,620.81 and oil was unchanged at 1.33. Banking and financial services gained 1.68 points to 418.54.

"The market staged a technical rebound, helped by positive developments such as the peso's recovery against the dollar," said Nestor Aguila of DA Market Securities.

"Meralco's rate hike approval also helped to lift the key index."

Top-traded Meralco "B", open to foreign investors, added a peso to P22.75 while Meralco "A" gained 75 centavos to P14.75. First Philippine Holdings was up 75 centavos at P18.75. SM Prime fell 10 centavos to P6.40.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) rose P20 to P775 after as its dispute with US carriers over termination rates for calls landing in the Philippines appeared to be reaching an end. Ayala Corp. added five centavos to P4.80. *AFP*

Debt yields fall, banks watch retail bonds

BID rates on government bonds fell by between 10 and 30 basis points in the secondary market yesterday as some calm returned following a week marked by rising economic and political concerns.

Most banks were waiting for the result of a public offering of retail bonds that were issued to the market last week, traders said.

"Right now, market players are waiting to see how much the government raises from the issuance of retail bonds before taking positions in the secondary market," one trader said.

The government's rejection of most offers at last Thursday's auction of retail bonds took the market by surprise.

Players had expected the government would accept a coupon rate of up to 10.375 percent for the bonds, the proceeds from which would be used to partly fund the government's budget deficit in 2004.

But the Bureau of Treasury threw out the bulk of bids, awarding just P1.55 billion worth of the paper at a coupon rate of 10 percent, from tenders totalling P5.76 billion.

The lower-than-expected coupon rate on the retail bonds was one reason for the fall in secondary rates, traders said.

The Treasury said retail bonds would be offered to the public until Dec. 5. Treasurer Sergio Edeza had previously said he hoped the government could raise between P20 billion and P30 billion from the auction and public offering.

Analysts said the market had now priced in the resignation of Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho and the concerns sparked last week by the announcement that actor Fernando Poe Jr., a high school dropout who has never held public office, would run for president. *Reuters*

INTEREST RATES

December 01, 2003-MART1 Rates

Benchmark Interest Rates	MART1 1-Dec-03	MART1 28-Nov-03
1 Month	6.6714	6.7036
3 Months	6.8983	6.9017
6 Months	7.9167	7.955
1 Year	8.3683	8.52
2 Years	9.435	9.58
3 Years	10.2214	10.3233
4 Years	10.5533	10.66
5 Years	10.7633	10.9683
7 Years	11.375	11.485
10 Years	11.6283	11.7233
20 Years	11.9467	12.0117
25 Years	12.255	12.365

SOURCE: MART/BLOOMBERG

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MODEL	SRP.	LOW DOWNPAYMENT 20% Downpayment	LOW DOWNPAYMENT Actual Cash Out	LOW MONTHLY BASED ON 50% D/P at 60 months	*ZERO INTEREST 12 Mos.	*ZERO INTEREST 18 Mos.	*ZERO INTEREST 24 Mos.
					for downpayment as low as		
Nissan Frontier III 4x2 M/T	825,000.00	165,000.00	118,000.00	8,607.00	20%	25%	50%
Nissan Frontier III 4x2 M/T Titanium	925,000.00	185,000.00	138,000.00	9,885.00	20%	35%	
Nissan Frontier III 4x4 M/T	1,100,000.00	220,000.00	173,000.00	12,036.00	20%	45%	
Nissan Urvan Escapade	870,000.00	174,000.00	121,000.00	9,091.00	20%	20%	50%
Nissan Patrol 4x2 A/T Dsl	2,220,000.00	444,000.00	385,000.00	24,990.00	50%		

Promo period is from November 17 to December 16, 2003.

Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 3509 Series of 2003

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Gov't awards ₱5.94B worth of power transmission projects

By Ronnel W. Domingo

STATE firm National Transmission Corp. has awarded to contractors two projects to link island power grids in the Visayas worth P5.94 billion, Energy Secretary Vincent Perez Jr. said yesterday.

During the launch of the National Energy Week celebrations, Perez said the partnership of Japanese firms Kanematsu Corp. and J Power Systems was awarded the $68-million (about P3.74 billion) contract to do the Leyte-Cebu interconnection uprating project.

"We anticipate loan negotiations to be concluded by the middle of this month," Perez said.

The Japanese firms are in talks with the Japan Bank for International Cooperation on the financing of the project.

Perez also announced that the contract for the $40-million (about P2.2 billion) Cebu-Mactan interconnection project has been awarded.

The official did not name the winning contractor for the submarine transmission line project, saying only that a contract signing would be formalized in the next few weeks.

"This is good news for industrial electricity users located in the Cebu export processing zone," he said.

Data from Transco showed that the uprated Leyte-Cebu transmission lines were expected to be ready for service as early as December 2004.

The installation of a second 32.5-kilometer underwater transmission line between Leyte and Cebu would give an additional 200 megawatts of energy from Leyte to the Cebu-Negros-Panay (CNP) area.

The added capacity would double the volume of electricity being exported from geothemal energy-endowed Leyte to power-hungry CNP.

Meantime, the Cebu-Mactan project, seen completed by December 2005, aims to bring up the capacity of power transmission from Cebu to Mactan to 200 MW from 40 MW.

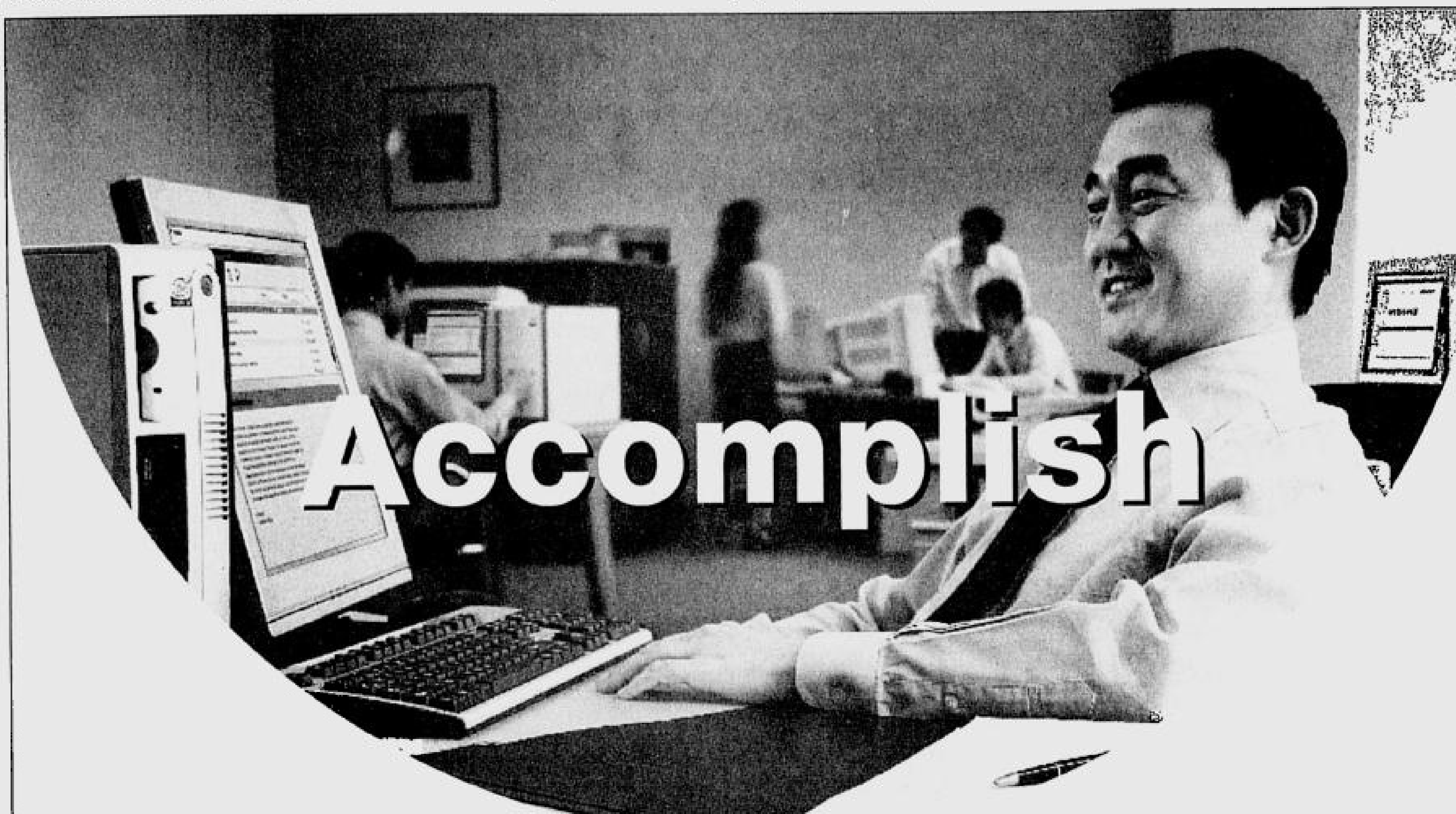
The government is stepping up efforts to ensure that a looming power shortage in the Cebu-Negros-Panay grid would be avoided, especially during the holiday season.

Perez said earlier that the DOE had authorized the National Transmission Corp. to start negotiations with independent power producers Duracom Power and Aggreko on the possible lease of their power barges and generating units.

"Preventive maintenance of the Visayas transmission lines and generating plants were completed recently to prepare for the seasonal peak demand in December," Perez said.

The official said the National Electrification Administration had also been instructed to prod distribution utilities to negotiate with other generators for additional supply.

VIPS GRACE NISSAN 350Z LAUNCH
Nissan Motor Philippines Inc. president and CEO Leman Lee (right) welcomes Taiwan's Minister of Economic Affairs Lin Yi-Fu (left) and Ambassador Wu Hsin-Hsing of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office during the launch of the Nissan 350Z, the new sports car of Nissan. Yulon Motor Corp., the mother company of Nissan, is the biggest automotive company based in Taiwan.



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Cyber Bay makes final appeal on reclamation deal

By Doris C. Dumlao

CYBER Bay Reclamation Development Corp. has not given up hopes that the Supreme Court would reverse its decision to nullify its development contract with the Philippine Estate Authority (PEA), but may seek international arbitration if its third and final appeal fails.

In a briefing yesterday, Cyber Bay legal counsel Ronaldo Modesto Ventura said: "We'd like to believe that the SC will still hear valid and reasonable arguments."

Cyber Bay seeks to orally argue its case with the high tribunal, which recognizes third appeals only on a limited basis. On the other hand, Cyber Bay president Peter Suchianco said the PEA itself was now resigned to the idea that the joint venture covering a 750-hectare reclamation development in Roxas Boulevard could not breeze through the judicial barriers.

As a last resort, however, the developer--which has lost its second appeal at the high court—can file a petition to claim damages with the International Chamber of Commerce.

"The arbitration remedy will provide for reimbursement. But right now, we still want the contract upheld," Suchiangco said.

Ventura said there was no due process in the termination of the joint-venture contract between PEA and Cyber Bay. After the venture hurdled questions on constitutionality, he lamented it was nullified because of alleged bribery involved in the deal.

However, he said there was no judicial process involved in determining whether indeed money changed hands in the forging of the contract, noting that the SC had relied only on a Senate report, which was made on the basis of the original joint-venture agreement and not the amended JVA.

"The court totally disregarded the findings of the counterpart Lower House report, which upheld the validity of the amended JVA," Ventura said.

November deficit seen on track

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE MACAPAGAL administration was likely on track in staying within its P18-billion budget deficit ceiling in November as revenues and expenditures appeared to be on target after the government tightened its hold on spending while sustaining improvements in collection.

Customs Commissioner Antonio Bernardo yesterday said his bureau likely met its P8.84-billion target last month. Revenue Commissioner Guillermo Parayno Jr. said that it had been struggling to meet the P41-billion November target although an agreement with banks for the voluntary payment of back gross receipts taxes could help the bureau achieve the goal.

"I think we will be within target in November. We would not veer away from fiscal discipline. We are committed to work to raise revenue through improved administration," said Finance Undersecretary Juanita Amatong, officer-in-charge of the DOF.

Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin said there continued to be some problems with constructive cash but any spike in spending should have been offset by tighter disbursements.

"It's only a month to go. I think we are very comfortable in meeting the P202-billion deficit target for the year," Boncodin added.

The government must limit its spending to about P72 billion in November and P61 billion this month to meet the deficit targets of P18 billion last month and P11.22 billion in December. In the third quarter, expenditures exceeded the ceiling by P19 billion.

As of October, the gap between revenues and expenditures stood at P163.88 billion or P8 billion lower than the ceiling of P171.88 billion for the 10-month period.

The government is expected to exceed the budget deficit this month by P5 billion due to Malacañang's decision to award an additional P5,000 Christmas cash gift to each of the national government's one million employees, a move that was not included in the fiscal program for the year.

$355-M coal-fired power plant gets funding

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE CONSTRUCTION of a 210-megawatt coal-fired power plant in Mindanao is expected to start immediately with the proponents now ready with the funding for the $355-million (about P9.5 billion) project, Energy Secretary Vincent Perez said.

Perez said State Power Development Corp. signed yesterday the project contract with National Power Corp. and the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp.

He said a group of banks had agreed to provide the needed financing, including Kreditstanstalt für Wiederaufbau, Dresdner Kleinwort Wasserstein, HypoVereinsbank, Japan Bank for International Cooperation, Nippon Export and Investment Insurance, and Banco de Oro.

"We expect the Mindanao coal facility to be on-stream by December of 2006," he said. "The plant is designed to meet the high environmental standards of the government and the World Bank."

State Power is a partnership between Germany's leading independent power producer Steag AG and State Investment Trust Inc. (Siti).

It was Siti that bested six rivals in a bidding for the contract with Napocor in 1997.

The Mindanao coal plant is seen to replace certain oil-fired power plants and add to the generating capacity in the island.

Also, the coal-fired facility is expected to mitigate the impact of unpredictable water resources and the resulting volatility in dependable generating capacity from the hydro power plants.

Records from the Department of Energy show that a debilitating supply shortage is expected to occur in Mindanao by 2006, the same year that the Mindanao coal plant is scheduled for commercial operation.

Perez noted that Mindanao had been experiencing economic growth as indicated by the 10-percent increase in Napocor's electricity sales in the first half of this year.

CCBPI names new president

COCA-Cola Bottlers Philippines Inc., the soft drink bottling unit of San Miguel Corp., recently named Roberto N. Huang as its new president, succeeding Genaro Lapez.

In a statement yesterday, SMC said Huang, 55, was the conglomerate's corporate sales director prior to this appointment and had served in various managerial capacities in the group's sales and marketing organization.

Lapez, for his part, resigned from Coca-Cola to move to another company.

As corporate sales director, Huang oversaw the sales operations for SMC's beverage products, including liquor, as well as those for food products.

The new CCBPI chief is a licensed mechanical engineer who graduated from the Mapua Institute of Technology. He obtained his masters degree in business administration at the De La Salle University.

Doris C. Dumlao

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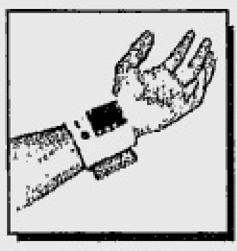

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TOYOTA

PDIC readies plan to help banks dispose of NPAs

By Elena R. Torrijos

STATE-OWNED Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp. aims to establish a program involving the take-out of billions of pesos worth of nonperforming assets—bad loans and foreclosed or acquired property—of troubled banks.

Despite the enactment of the Special Purpose Vehicle Act earlier this year, not a single bank has entered into a major transaction eligible for tax and other incentives provided by the law because of the large losses banks will have to book if they agree to sell the NPAs at the 15-25 percent price range quoted by foreign investment firms.

The bad assets, however, have dragged down the profitability of banks and constrained lending.

"We have certain powers which the other entities do not have and we're trying to conceptualize how we can contribute to the reduction of the banking system's NPAs with some funding arrangements with BSP," Tan said in an interview last week.

No concrete scheme has been drawn up yet but Tan said that among the ideas being floated included the PDIC providing cash of up to 80 percent of the value of NPAs to be sold by a bank.

"We give them the money to get income support (for the NPAs) and they assign us government securities and we pay back the BSP," Tan said. Eventually, PDIC would also be repaid by the bank as well, Tan added.

In a speech before the Chamber of Thrift Banks last Nov. 21, Tan said that PDIC was open to ideas and was soliciting suggestions on how PDIC could help the banks dispose of their NPAs given the provisions of the SPV law and the government financial institution's own charter.

The charter limits banks eligible for financial assistance to those deemed in danger of shutting down. PDIC's guidelines define such banks as those having a capital-to-risk asset ratio of 4 percent to 7 percent but with indication it might fall below 4 percent within six to 12 months and with serious liquidity problem.

Also, Tan said that any scheme would have to take into account burden or pain-sharing between the bank and PDIC and that PDIC assistance should be less expensive than the costs PDIC would incur if the bank were placed under receivership.

As of June 30 this year, the country's over 900 banks had an aggregate past due loans and loans under litigation amounting to P305 billion and real and other property owned or acquired amounting to P225 billion.

Collapse of RP-S. Korea talks disappoints local airline

By Abigail L. Ho

GOKONGWEI-OWNED Cebu Pacific Air expressed disappointment over the collapse of the air talks between the Philippines and South Korea as no additional flights to Seoul could be mounted despite an influx of Korean tourists.

Cebu Pacific vice president for corporate planning and external affairs Peggy Vera said in an interview over the weekend that the airline was actually ready to mount additional flights to Seoul had new entitlements been granted.

Negotiations for additional Seoul entitlements bogged down Thursday when the South Korean panel refused to grant the Philippine panel's request to change the manner of counting entitlements from frequencies to seats.

Philippine negotiators had pushed for the conversion of entitlements from frequencies to seats so that local airlines would be able to take better advantage of its entitlements despite their lack of wide-bodied jets that their Korean counterparts were using for the Manila-Seoul route.

If smaller aircraft were used for flights to Seoul, Philippine carriers would be able to mount more flights per week if the entitlements were seat-based instead of frequency-based.

"It is very disappointing for us. We support the Philippine position to pursue the seat formula. But if the Koreans really won't agree, we could still have gotten additional capacity using whatever formula is acceptable," Vera said.

An industry source revealed that the Philippine and Korean panels would meet again "at a later date when the (Philippine negotiators are ready to talk on frequency."

"We haven't come up with a final date yet, but we'll meet again when we're ready to talk on frequency. The Koreans seem to be taking a hard stance on this. They are sticking with the frequency-based formula," the source said.

CONCERNED BAGUIO COUNTRY CLUB MEMBERS
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8737 Paseo de Roxas, Makati City
Tel. Nos. 815-2892/8140418 Fax 8673720

Dear Members and Stockholders of Baguio Country Club:

Please be informed that our scheduled December 3, 2003 meeting has been moved as follows:

Date : December 4, 2003
Place : Makati Sports Club
Time : 5:00 p.m.

In the meantime, we wish to inform you of the following:

The supposed "annual stockholders meeting" held last November 6, 2003 was conducted in open defiance of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) resetting the meeting to a later date. Moreover, the aforesaid meeting was not in accordance with the "Status Quo Order" issued by the Court of Appeals.

The SEC disallowed the amendment of the Articles of Incorporation that involves the conversion of our Club to a non-stock corporation.

We shall be discussing the implications of the foregoing as well as other matters.

We look forward to seeing you at that meeting. Bring even more of your friends who are concerned about the affairs of our Club.

Sincerely,

Carlos A. Pedrosa
Member 3724

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9:30 - 10:00 Keynote Address - by Atty. Raul S. Roco
10:00 - 10:30 The National SME Agenda - by Under Sec. Gregory L. Domingo, DTI
10:30 - 11:00 The Philippine Model for Digitizing SMEs - by Ms. Merle Yaptenco, Pres & CEO, Fix Systems, Inc. & Former UN Consultant
11:00 11:15 --- Tea Break---
11:15 -11:45 Starting Your E-Business: Basic Steps - by William Cabelin, Corporate Sales Manager, Pacific Internet
11:45 -12:15 Open Forum
12:15 -1:30pm --- Lunch Break---

PM Programme
1:30 - 2:00 Financing Your E-Business - by Melvin E. Abanto, VP, Small Business Guarantee & Finance Corp. (SBGFC)
2:00 - 2:30 Essential IP Issues for SMEs - by Atty. Gwen Grecia de Vera, PJS Law
2:30 3:00 Online Advertising in a Post Dotcom World by Ramon D. Lizardo, VP INQ7.net
3:00 - 3:15 --- Tea Break ---
3:15 - 3:45 Case Studies of SME Doing E-Business Case Number 1
3:45 - 4:15 Case Number 2
4:15 - 4:30 Open Forum
4:30 - 5:00 Business Consultation

December 03, 2003, Wednesday
Focus on Electronic Payment and Solutions

AM Programme
9:00 - 9:30 Registration
9:30 10:15 Electronic payment as a major challenge in the success of e-Business - by Emmanuel Herbosa, Vice President, BPI
10:15 11:00 Online Payment Solutions by Eric J. Severino, Director, Sales & Marketing, BancNet
11:00 -11:30 --- Tea Break ---
11:30 -12:15 Online Payment Solutions - by Gregorio C. Severino, Assistant VP, Equitable PCI Bank
12:15 -12:45 Panel Reaction/Open Forum
--- Lunch Break --- (working lunch/to be served)

PM Programme
1:00 1:30 Official Address of Secretary Mar Roxas Secretary, Department of Trade & Industry (DTI)
1:45 - 2:30 Protection Beyond Firewalls by Yancy Piczon, Technical Consultant, Computer Associates (CA)
2:30 - 3:15 Wireless Financial Transactions - by Manuel Acuna, IT Director, Lhuillier Group of Companies
3:15 - 3:45 --- Tea Break ---
3:45 - 4:15 Wireless Payment - what's the uptake? - by Reo S. Babasa, Sr Mngr, Bus. Dev. Smart Communications, Inc.
4:15 - 4:30 Open Forum
4:30 - 5:00 Business Consultation

December 04, 2003, Thursday
Focus on Convergent Technologies

AM Programme
9:00 - 9:30 Registration
9:30 - 10:00 Convergent technologies making it affordable fro SMEs to do e-business - by Arthur Tan, President, Integrated Microelectronics Inc.(IMI)
10:00-10:30 Making Wi-Fi Technology accessible to SMEs - by Edmund R. Pike, Product Development Manager, PLDT
10:30-10:45 --- Tea Break ---
10:45-11:15 Mobility and Wireless solutions for the SMEs via portable & handheld computing devices - by Paolo C. Lopez, Head-Bus.Dev. Globe Solutions
11:15-11:45 Hewlett Packard Philippines Inc. Presentation - by Jermyn 'Wowie' L. Wong, Market Development Manager, Personal Systems Group, HP Philippines Inc.
11:45-12:15 Panel Reaction/Open Forum
12:15-1:30 --- Lunch Break ---

PM Programme
1:30 - 2:00 Transforming the Internet Cafe into shared access and business solutions center - by Raymond Ricafort, Pres., Digital Paradise Inc.
2:00 - 2:30 Making inventory management more efficient through automation - by Antonio S. Darjuan Jr., PLDT
2:30 3:00 --- Tea Break ---
3:00 - 3:30 Sales automation using wireless & mobile technologies - by Christopher H. Cheng, Head-Technical & Wireless Applications, Globe Solutions
3:30 - 4:00 Open Forum
4:00 - 5:00 Business Consultation

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NTC warns SkyCable on repositioning of channels

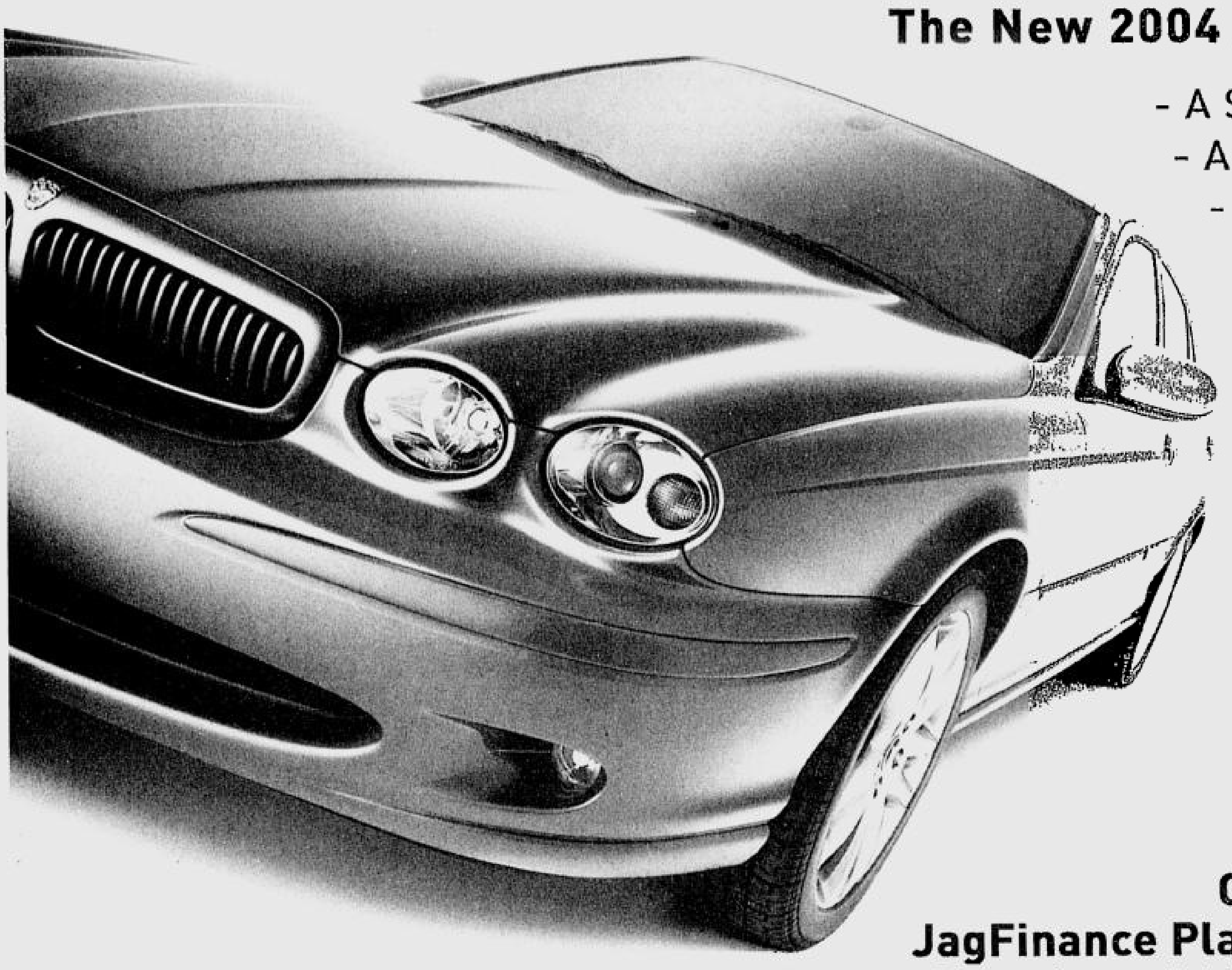
By Abigail L. Ho

LOPEZ-OWNED SkyCable Central CATV Inc. may face the suspension of its license to operate if it does not comply with a National Telecommunications Commission order for it to return GMA Network Inc.'s channel position in its system to 12 from the current 14.

In a three-page order dated Nov. 28, the NTC gave SkyCable 10 days upon receipt of the order to comply or face the indefinite suspension of its license.

"Failure on the part of respondent to comply with this order, respondent's authority to operate a (cable television) service in Quezon City, Makati City, Manila, Pasay City, Pasig City, Mandaluyong City, and San Juan, Metro Manila granted under NTC Case No. 90-111, is suspended for an indefinite period until such time as this order is complied with," the order stated.

The NTC based its recent order on a decision it issued in April 25, ordering the Lopez-owned cable firm "to cease from arbitrarily changing channel assignments without advance notice" to television stations, the public and the NTC.



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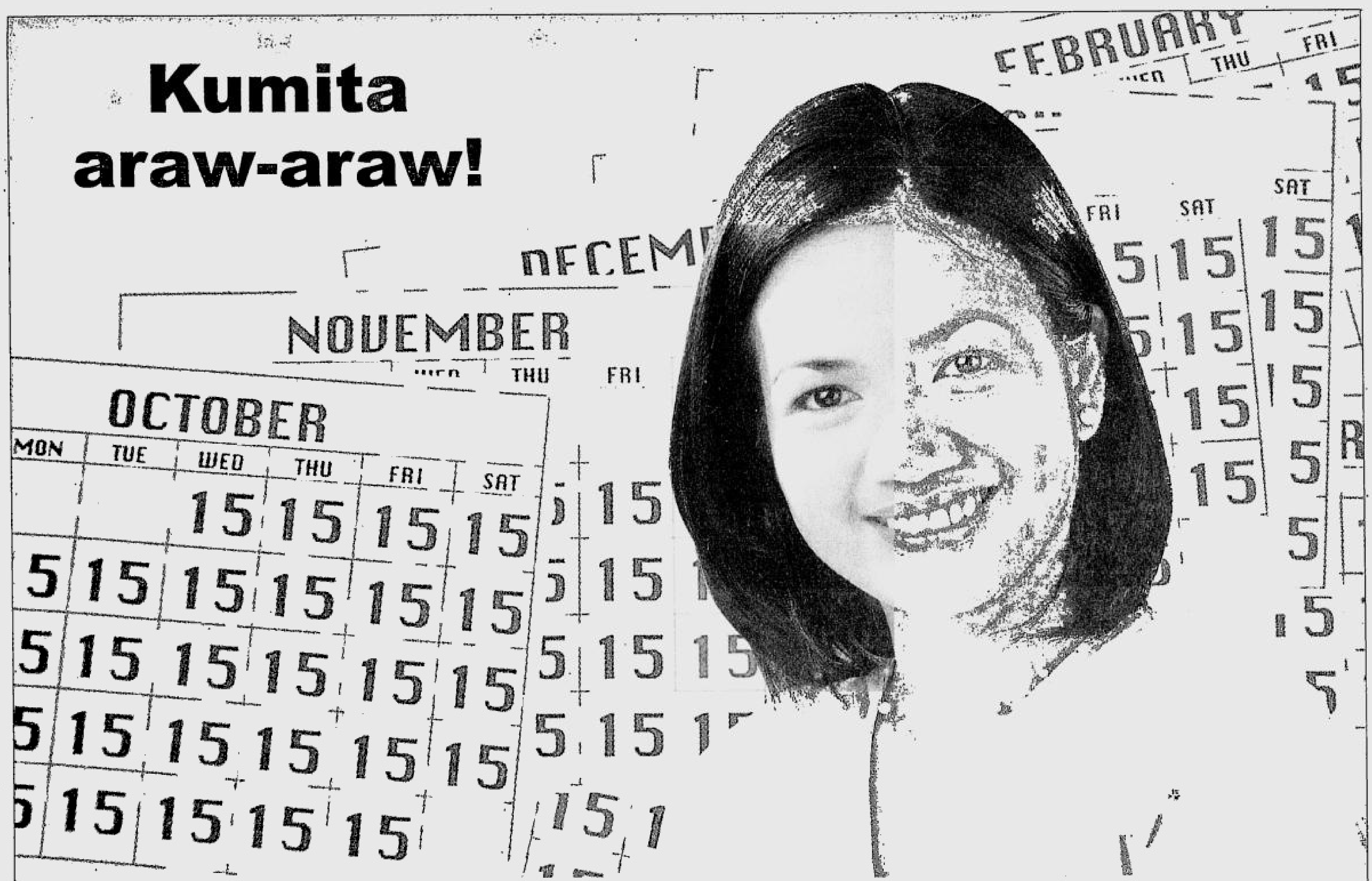

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Chronic fatigue syndrome hits government

MR. BEARBULL

Ron Nathan

ALL shopping centers look alike to me. When you've seen one, you've seen a mall.

I have decided to write future articles in Filipino. This is as far as I have got. ENGLISH VERSION: AYALA LAND IS GOING DOWN. FILIPINO VERSION: ALI BABA.

MADELINE'S grace before meals:

WE LOVE OUR BREAD,
WE LOVE OUR BUTTER,
BUT MOST OF ALL,
WE LOVE EACH OTHER.

I think that is beautiful.

Seen on TV. Starlet, "Every time I sneeze, I have an orgasm." Interviewer, "What are you taking for it?" Starlet, "Pepper."

Two explosions in Turkey have put an end to the Istanbull market.

As I was not felling well I went to the doctor. He said, "When you wake up in the morning, take a red pill with a large glass of water. At lunch, take a blue pill with a large glass of water. Before sleeping, take a green pill with a large glass of water."

Alarmed, I said, "What's wrong with me?" The doctor replied, "You are not drinking enough water."

A couple in a home for the aged decided they would try to make love even though they were over 80.

"I must tell you," said the woman, "I have acute angina." "I should hope so," said the man, "the rest of you is pretty repulsive."

A woman was having an affair with her dentist for the past two months. "I think we should break it off," said the dentist. "You husband might get suspicious." "Oh, don't worry about him. He's totally unaware." "That may be," said the dentist, "but we are down to your last tooth."

I went to my favorite bookstore and prominently displayed was THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES. I peeped at a few pages and blushed. Nothing that I have ever written even remotely compares with it. How on earth did it ever get published?

* * *

FINANCE Secretary Camacho resigned suddenly, citing emotional exhaustion, and National Treasurer Edeza will be leaving on Jan. 31, 2,004 due to fatigue. I must confess I never realized that government officials worked themselves so hard for a miserable P50,000 a month.

I guess that when I reach their age, I will have to slow down too. Both were highly regarded here and overseas, so their departure is unsettling, particularly six months before the election.

The obvious conclusion is that they left in order to avoid a conflict in the months ahead regarding the financial discipline necessary to contain the budget deficit.

After weeks of prevaricating, FPJ has at last announced his intention of running for President. The Makati Business Club and GMA were not pleased, neither were foreign strategists who fear a repeat of the Estrada debacle.

The Phisix tumbled 25 points and the peso slipped to a record low against a very weak dollar. Next day, the index fell another 5 points, but the peso recovered a little ground. It is not my job to comment on the merits of the various candidates; I leave that to the political analysts. I intend to write about events only insofar as they relate to the stock market.

Although the index fell on Thursday and Friday, net turnover, excluding cross sales was fairly modest so there was no panic selling either by foreign brokers or by local investors.

Foreign brokers did most of their selling three to four weeks ago, when the degree of risk was 97 and the Phisix more than 100 points higher than it is now.

A rally started last week but was aborted by the announcements of FPJ and Mr. Camacho. The risk factor today is 22, on Friday it was 12, so it is not the time to dump good stocks.

There has been selective foreign selling of ALI and SMPH, both of which have recorded substantial falls. There has also been profit taking on TEL and GLOBE, hardly surprising as they have had very big gains this year.

ING has been buying PETRON heavily and it has risen from P2.02 to P2.16 since I wrote about it last week. MERB is getting a 12-centavo rate increase and the shares rallied as this will help their viability.

The Energy Regulatory Commission took the view that avoidance of future power shortages should be the prime consideration and the temporary rate increase would allow them to start 42 expansion projects to improve services.

On the economic front, the 3rd quarter results were above expectations with GDP better than expected at 4.4 percent. Agriculture showed a rise of 5.5 percent, against an expected 4.2 percent, due to outstanding growth of palay, fishery and forestry, supported by favorable weather conditions and the government.

The service industry also grew at a faster pace of 5.5 percent due to a stronger than expected rebound of government services. Industry grew at 2.3 percent, within expectations and there was strong growth in investment coming from durable equipment (19.8 percent).

This will eventually increase the competitiveness and productivity of a number of industries and thus enhance their export performance. The 4th quarter GDP is expected to slow down to 3.8 percent - 4 percent as the exceptional weather is unlikely to continue, but GDP for the year should at least hit 4.2 percent, which is the lower end of the government's target.

Manufacturing contributed 4.4 percent growth against 2.7 percent last year, and personal consumer spending continues to rise, so the outlook for 2004 remains favorable.

Over the next two months, my articles will tend to be shorter unless I include my adventures in Thailand, which the editor continues to censor. This is not because I am fed up writing. It is due to the fact that the dividend season has ended and there will not be any more company reports until the beginning of Feb. 2, 2004. Furthermore, I have just written the economic report for the 3rd quarter so the next update will not be until next year. So what will I write about? I have tried on three previous occasions to explain technical analysis in detail but it has never attracted much interest so I am not attempting it again.

In any event, you can get a great deal of information from the Internet.

We are probably in for a quiet period while the opposition party chooses its official candidate. If FPJ, the market will go lower; if Senator Lacson, it will breathe a sigh of relief. The foreign and local institutions will start their window dressing during the last few days of the year on the stocks that they own.

The prime candidate is TEL, but GLO, MERB, SMPH, PCOR, SMCB and ALI may also be in their portfolios. *mrbearbull@hotmail.com*

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of December 1, 2003)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	17	17.25	17	17.25	4,800
Bank of the Phil. Islands	43	43.5	43	43	899,200
China Banking Corp.	660	660	660	660	250
Citystate Savings Bank	15	15	15	15	1,500
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	34	34	34	34	53,400
Export And Ind. Bank Inc.	0.58	0.58	0.58	0.58	50,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	26	26	25.5	26	104,300
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	12.5	12.5	12.5	12.5	12,000
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
First Metro Invest. Corp.	200	200	200	200	200
Manulife Financial Corp.	1735	1740	1735	1740	1,340
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1340	1355	1340	1355	1,770
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	26	26.5	26	26.5	11,200
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.68	0.68	0.68	0.68	160,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	720	725	720	720	62,100
Ipeople Inc.	1	1.02	0.98	1.02	205,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.039	0.039	0.038	0.039	4,100,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	2.55	2.75	2.55	2.75	13,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	0.82	0.82	0.81	0.81	3,930,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	755	775	755	775	101,860
Philweb Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	2,000,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	14.5	15	14.5	14.75	759,700
Manila Electric Co. B	22	23	22	22.75	5,786,900
Petron Corp.	2.12	2.16	2.12	2.16	3,873,000
Salcon Power Corp.	2	2.02	2	2.02	18,000
Trans-Asia Oil And Energy	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	10,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.1	155,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	3.2	3.25	3.2	3.2	283,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	20,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.31	0.32	0.31	0.32	220,000
Phil Nat'l Const. Corp.	3	3	3	3	10,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.54	1.54	1.54	1.54	12,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.15	3.15	3.15	3.15	125,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	30.5	31	30.5	30.5	36,300
Jollibee Foods Corp.	16.75	17	16.75	17	1,762,800
Rfm Corp.	0.71	0.71	0.71	0.71	720,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.24	0.25	0.24	0.24	390,000
San Miguel Corp. A	54	54.5	54	54	41,100
San Miguel Corp. B	62	62	61	61.5	48,800
Universal Robina Corp.	5	5	5	5	1,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	300,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.33	0.35	0.33	0.35	70,000
Ayala Corp.	4.8	4.85	4.75	4.8	13,255,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3	3.1	3	3.1	50,000
A. Soriano Corp.	0.77	0.77	0.77	0.77	10,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	6,000,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	5,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.46	0.49	0.46	0.47	6,940,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	50,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	10.25	19	18.25	18.75	1,510,900
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	80,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	1.98	1.98	1.96	1.96	209,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.04	772,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.26	0.27	0.26	0.26	1,260,000
Music Corp.	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	140,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.13	0.18	0.13	0.18	500,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.98	0.98	0.97	0.97	30,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Matsushita Elec Phil Corp.	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	16,000
Prime Gaming Phils. Inc.	20	20	20	20	638,400
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.58	0.58	0.57	0.58	210,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	150,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	70,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	27	27	26	26	133,800
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	2,300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	2,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	2,100
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	1,600
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	5.4	5.5	5.3	5.4	8,540,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	40,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.125	0.135	0.125	0.135	1,700,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.215	0.22	0.215	0.215	3,220,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.04	1.06	1.04	1.06	1,080,000
Keppel Phils. Prop. Inc.	0.85	0.85	0.83	0.83	30,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.155	0.19	0.155	0.19	90,000
City & Land Developers	1.88	1.88	1.88	1.88	10,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.185	0.185	0.185	0.185	300,000
SM Development Corp.	1.08	1.08	1.08	1.08	9,000
SM Prima Holdings Inc.	6.5	6.6	6.3	6.4	17,735,000
MINING					
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.225	0.225	0.22	0.225	520,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.31	680,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.0075	0.0075	0.007	0.007	19,000,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	78,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.39	0.39	0.39	0.39	200,000
OIL					
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	50,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	500,000

	SHARES	VALUE(P)
Bank & Fin Svc	1,128,760	48,586,600.00
Comm'l & Ind'l	57,283,860	431,002,400.00
PRO	32,754,000	162,483,720.00
Mining	98,400,000	1,204,200.00
OIL	550,000	20,500.00
GRAND TOTALS :	190,116,620	643,297,420.00
AVERAGES		
Bank & Fin Svc	418.54	UP 1.68
Comm'l & Ind'l	1,974.24	UP 12.13
PRO	540.35	DOWN 3.10
Mining	1,620.81	UP 10.59
OIL	1.33	UNCH 0.00
SME	100.00	UNCH 0.00
All Shares Index	843.69	UP 7.34
Composite	1,321.26	UP 7.39

NO. OF ADVANCES: 27; NO. OF DECLINES: 17; NO. OF UNCHANGED: 40; NO. OF TRADED ISSUES: 84; NO. OF TRADES: 1,907

HK economy grew in Nov.

HONG KONG—Strong demand from overseas buyers in the US and China helped fuel Hong Kong's economy for the sixth straight month in November although the growth was slower than the previous month, the latest Purchasing Manager's Index (PMI) survey showed.

The index dipped to 56.3 in November but it is "broadly consistent" with October's three-and-a-half year peak at 56.5, the survey said. A reading of 50 or above indicates economic expansion.

The Chartered Institute of Purchasing & Supply, a joint compiler of the index, said new businesses drove growth in November and the 300 companies it surveyed widely linked improved volume of new businesses to stronger client confidence.

"Faced with the recent buying spree reported in our major markets, particularly United States and mainland China, our panelists are expanding their capacity to meet the anticipated growth," Paul Ng, deputy chair of the institute, said in a statement.

The monthly index fell to its lowest this year in April when the deadly SARS virus struck. It rebounded to above 50 in June when the outbreak ended and had risen steadily since then until November. *Reuters*

Euro hits new high, Asian stocks steady

SINGAPORE—The euro hit a new record high against the dollar and two-month highs against the yen on Monday, as political and economic fears gripped the US currency, but Asian stocks gained as exporters geared up for a pre-Christmas shopping rush.

The euro stretched to a new high of $1.2040, up half a cent from late Friday levels, before retreating to $1.2020.

The single currency, which traded at $1.1740 when it was launched in January 1999, has recovered from a record low of around $0.8225 set in October 2000.

Japanese stocks fell and bonds fell in early trade but quickly recovered as investors digested the government's surprise nationalization of insolvent Ashikaga Bank, the core unit of Ashikaga Financial Group.

The Nikkei average was up 0.77 percent, recovering from a 1.17 percent drop to finish the morning at 10,177.84. Banks fell 1.27 percent.

To calm market nerves, the Bank of Japan poured additional funds into the money market, which supported the JGB market.

An MSCI index of Asian stock markets excluding Japan gained 0.25 percent. South Korea's KOSPI jumped 1.29 percent on news that the government would auction its 9.1 percent stake in the country's biggest bank, Kookmin Bank.

Australia's bourse was the standout loser. Expectations the central bank would raise rates this week sent the benchmark S&P/ASX 200 index down 0.64 percent, to 3,166.

Strong US economic figures that helped propel stocks higher last week were expected to support markets in the week to come. Ahead this week is November jobs and manufacturing and services sector data.

US holiday weekend shopping figures will also be watched, as investors search for evidence consumers are spending heavily and helping stoke the economic recovery.

"The market has developed an upward bias, and I think it will continue into (this) week," said Stanley Nabi, managing director at Credit Suisse Asset Management in the United States.

The day after Thanksgiving—known as Black Friday because it once marked the day when retailers got out of the red—is the traditional start to the holiday shopping season, which generates as much as 40 percent of annual revenues for toy stores and apparel chains.

Asian exporters were also looking for evidence of a holiday boost in US sales. Taiwan's TAIEX was the biggest winner with a 1.29 percent banks-led gain. Singapore's Straits Times Index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng Index also rose.

Gold opened slightly higher in Asia in line with the euro's rise and on renewed buying interest from Japanese investors. *Reuters*

DISCLOSURES

ELECTED directors of **Liberty Telecoms Holdings Inc.** were Raymond Moreno, Pedro Tan, Rene Jose Domingo, Jose Luis Moreno, Alexander Corpuz, Raymond John Moreno and Noel Dela Merced.

***

SINCE no quorum could be obtained in November, **CYBER Bay Corp.**'s annual stockholders' meeting was postponed until further notice.

***

LEISURE and Resorts World Corp. will decrease its authorized capital stock from P2.5 billion to P1.6 billion to eliminate its deficit of over P421 million. Also, the company changed the date of its annual stockholders' meeting from third Tuesday of April to last week of June.

***

MATSUSHITA Electric Philippines Corp.'s Panasonic Industrial Sales Philippines division will operate only until March 31, 2004 after the company's decision not to sell and distribute Panasonic Industrial products in the country. ***Compiled by Maricar D. Tolosa, PDI Research***

PUBLIC AUCTION
HMR AUCTION SERVICES, INC.
VIEWING DATE: DECEMBER 1, 2003 (MON) 9:00 AM TO 6:00 PM
AUCTION DATE: DECEMBER 2, 2003 (TUES) 10:30 AM
VENUE: MANILA CLUB, INC., WINDMILL BLDG. MAGALLANES SHOPPING CENTER,MAKATI CITY
P10,000 REFUNDABLE DEPOSIT DUE UPON REGISTRATION
Closure of Distributor: Professional German and Italian Cutlery, Kitchenware and Bathroom Sets from
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Microsoft goal: Computer in every car

REDMOND, Washington—First Microsoft set out to put a computer in every home. Now the software giant hopes to put one in every vehicle, too.

"We'd like to have one of our operating systems in every car on Earth," said Dick Brass, vice-president of Microsoft's automotive business unit. "It's a lofty goal."

Cars with the Microsoft software will speak up when it's time for an oil change. They'll warn drivers about wrecks on the road ahead and scout alternative routes. They'll pay freeway tolls automatically. The software running their brakes will upgrade itself wirelessly.

The Microsoft platform already is in 23 different car models, including the BMW 7 series, Citroen, Daimler, Fiat, Volvo, Hyundai, Mitsubishi, Subaru and Toyota.

Brass made his remarks last week at a technology, tolls and transportation conference held at Microsoft and sponsored by the Discovery Institute's Cascadia Project.

Globally, there are 650 million cars, and 50 million new vehicles are produced every year, Brass said—comparable to the market for desktop computers.

Microprocessors already control major vehicle functions. And for years, Microsoft has been making inroads in automotive telematics, a combination of computers and telecommunications.

Brass said drivers spend millions of hours commuting and are distracted by myriad gadgets, including handheld viewers that offer traffic reports from the state Department of Transportation.

Microsoft's "TBox," which he said will be available in 12 to 36 months, can connect them all and make them hands-free.

The device has a processor, memory and a hard drive with no moving parts, said Peter Wengert, marketing manager for Microsoft's automotive unit.

At the conference, Brass showed on-the-street interviews asking what gadgets future cars should carry.

"I don't want Ford making PDAs, and I don't want Microsoft making cars," one man said.

But bringing the two together seems inevitable. *AP*

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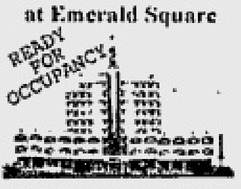

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3.	One (1) Lot – Unserviceable items, approx. 172 tons (24-Items) such as: Steel Plates; Pipe-Fittings; Acid-Tanks; Compressors; Cylinders; Flanges; Etc. Please see list and pictures with the Bid Forms. Located at Manila Thermal Power Plant.	5.00 / kilo
4.	One (1) Lot – Junk Items, consisting of Corroded-Drums, Air-Heater-Elements; Junk Motor Vehicles and Angle-Bars. Approx. 33 tons. Please see lists and pictures with the Bid Forms. Located at Manila Thermal Power Plant	3.00 / kilo
	SCHEDULE-II BID OPENING: DEC. 12, 2003 (2:00 PM) **PLACE: MMD BIDDING ROOM, NPC HEAD OFFICE**	
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"In holiness I will look upon Your face,
Oh Lord, and when I awake in Heaven,
I will delight in seeing You face to face."
Psalm 17

In memoriam

Clotilde del Fierro-de la Vega

Born to eternal life on 02 December 1999

My mother was the making of me. She was so true and so sure of me,
I felt that I had someone to live for – someone I must not disappoint.
The memory of my mother will always be a blessing to me.
• Thomas A. Edison (1847-1931)

"For my integrity you have supported me and et me stand in your presence forever". Psalm 41:13

EVARISTO PANGANIBAN GUIAO, JR., M.D., MPH

"A Dear Husband and Loving Father"

Passed away in the Grace of our Lord on November 14, 2003
at the age of 43 in Marshall Islands

His bereaved wife **NIDA**; sons **PATRICK NEIL & JOMARI EVAN**; parents **EVER** (†) **& NEDY**; sister **JOSIE**; brothers **CHRIS & MIKE**; parents-in-law **DIONISIO SR.** (†) **& NORMA**; brothers & sisters-in-law, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Faith Chapel, Arlington Memorial Chapels, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Wednesday, December 3, 2003 at the Valenzuela Memorial Park, Viente Reales, Valenzuela City, after the 10:00 a.m. Mass at the San Isidro Labrador Parish Church, Malinta, Valenzuela City.

DANTE PAGADUAN VERAYO

March 02, 1930 - November 30, 2003

His loving wife **LIGAYA**; children and children-in-law **HOMER & AURORA**, **LIDA & JOSE ROBERTO CONSTANTINO**, **SOCRATES & ARLENE** and **ARISTOTLE** and grandchildren request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Holy Trinity Memorial Chapels, Sucat Road, Parañaque City.

Interment will be on Thursday, December 04, 2003 at the Loyola Memorial Park, Parañaque City after the Memorial Mass at Our Lady of Grace Parish, Ireneville Subd., Sucat Road, Parañaque City at 9:00 a.m.

For further inquiries, please call 825-1296, 825-3083 local 109.

"...absent with the body to be present with the Lord."
Matthew 10:39

Judge HECTOR VALLEJO DONATO

of Vigan and Cabugao, Ilocos Sur

Peacefully joined our Lord
on November 27, 2003 at the age of 74.

His dear wife **Caridad** (†); his beloved **Fe**; his children **Cynthia, Carol, Iggy, Dennis, Joji** (†), **Judith**; **German, Kimmy**; children-in-law, grandchildren, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains will be cremated in Seattle, Washington, U.S.A.

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We, the family of the late

BIENVENIDO "RENE" R. GOMEZ

Fondly remember him on the
FIFTH YEAR since he joined
our Heavenly Father

Holy Masses will be offered today, Tuesday
02 December 2003 at the following Churches:

- **Saint Francis of Assisi Church**
  Shaw Boulevard, Mandaluyong City .... 6:00 a.m.
- **Christ the King Church**
  Green Meadows, Quezon City .... 6:00 a.m.
- **Santuario de San Jose**
  Greenhills, San Juan .... 6:15 a.m.
- **Santuario de San Antonio**
  Forbes Park, Makati City .... 6:15 a.m.
- **San Agustin Church**
  Palatin, Pasig City .... 6:00 p.m.
- **Sta. Rosa de Lima Church**
  Bagong Ilog, Pasig City .... 6:00 p.m.
- **Holy Family Church**
  Bo. Capitolyo, Pasig City .... 6:00 p.m.
- **St. John the Baptist Church**
  Taytay, Rizal .... 6:00 p.m.
- **Immaculate Concepcion Church**
  Pasig City .... 6:30 p.m.
- **Sta. Clara de Monte Falco**
  Caniogan, Pasig City .... 7:00 p.m.

"The Lord will open to them the gate of paradise,
and they will return to the homeland
where there is no death,
but only lasting joy."

Luciano Urban Luczon, MC, AFP (Ret)

UP College of Medicine, Class '37
Magsingal, Ilocos Sur

January 07, 1911 – November 30, 2003

"Surely goodness and love will follow
me all the days of my life,
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."
Psalm 23:6

Lived a fruitful 92 years under God's love and protection. Has touched many lives as a loving husband to wife **Pat Sarmiento Luczon** († Aug. 2001); a good provider and great source of strength to children **Salvador** and **Nida** († Dec. 2002), **Lilia** and **Val**, **Elizabeth** and **Nathaniel**; an inspiration to his grandchildren **Noel, Marissa, Luel** and **Marie, Gay** and **Allan, Renchie, Rochelle, Michael, Michelle, Jemie, Daniel** and great – apos **Hans** and **Bea** († Dec. 2002); a model of diligence and dedication to countless soldiers, students and patients, a helpful manong to his relatives, an officer and a gentleman, a proud Filipino, a friend and colleague, a child of God, he now rests in God's loving arms and waits until the grand reunion!

His body now lies in state at the Nacional Memorial Homes, Araneta Ave., Quezon City. Interment is on Saturday, December 6 at 10:00 A.M., Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina City.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."
John 3:16

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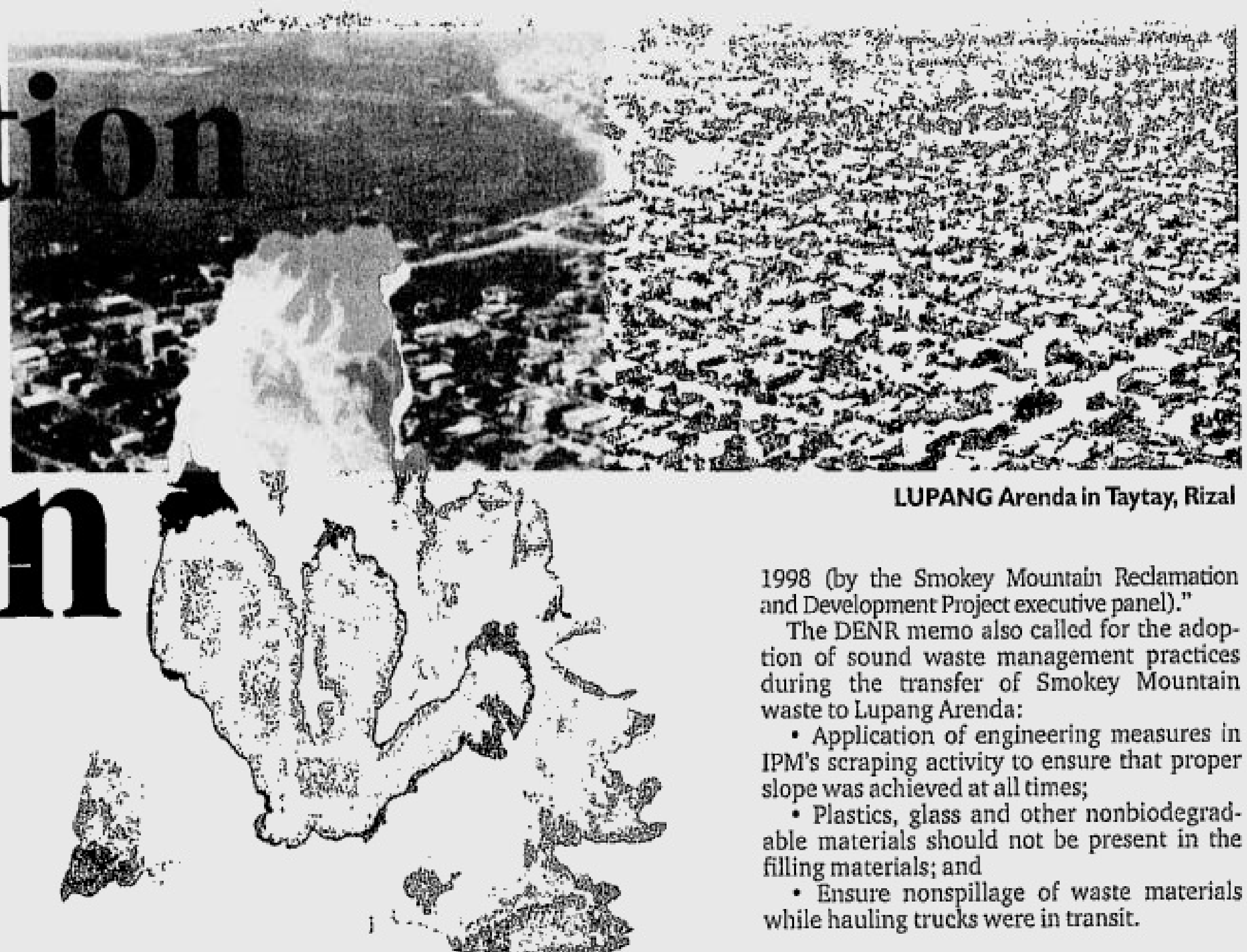
Editor **Cesar D. Mangawang**

Land reclamation eats up portion of lake basin



LUPANG Arenda in Taytay, Rizal

By Jerry Esplanada

(First of two parts)

SPECIAL REPORT

THE LAGUNA de Bay shoreland, with an estimated area of 14,000 hectares, has stretched by nearly 100 hectares.

Thanks to Presidential Proclamation 704 and tons of both stabilized and fresh garbage and other filling materials. Lupang Arenda in Taytay, Rizal, has risen from what used to be an area submerged for 6 to 8 months in befouled lake waters.

But that's not really good news, as far as the Laguna Lake Development Authority is concerned. The expanded shoreland had eaten up what was once a portion of the 90,000-hectare lake basin.

Worse, the alleged illegal land reclamation in the lake's northwestern fringes continues, said reports reaching the LLDA, an agency attached to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

From huts on stilts to sturdy houses

Up to the mid-1990s, water levels of up to 2 meters did not prevent squatter huts-on-stilts from sprouting in the Lupang Arenda area.

Today, much of the swampy areas and rickety structures atop water lilies there are gone. More sturdy houses, some made of concrete, have taken their place.

About 80 hectares of the more than 170-ha. shoreland are within the boundaries of Taytay while other parts are claimed by Pasig City and the neighboring town of Cainta.

Conflicting claims notwithstanding, Lupang Arenda has become a thriving squatter community.

When the problem began

But some old hands at the LLDA said the problem started on Nov. 28, 1995 when then President Fidel V. Ramos issued PP 704, which set aside an 80-ha. portion of the public domain at sitio Tapayan, barangay Sta. Ana in Taytay for housing development.

Pasig River squatters and Taytay's less-privileged families were the supposed beneficiaries of the Ramos directive, said to be pursuant to Republic Act 7279 (otherwise known as the Human Development and Housing Act of 1992).

But credit should also go to mountains of garbage collected from all over Metro Manila and later dumped and stabilized at Smokey Mountain.

Much of Lupang Arenda, now with a population of more than 25,000 families (and counting), is "standing on some 100,000 cubic meters of garbage and soil dumped into what used to be swampy shoreland," said executives of IPM Trading and Development Corp., one of the country's top construction, real estate and solid waste management firms.

Dwight Ramos, IPM vice president, recalled that sometime in April 2001 Lupang Arenda residents requested for "low-grade compost and other filling materials."

Several politicians and non-government groups had earlier promised to provide the flood-prone area with filling materials, "but nothing happened," said Mario Macabidang, another IPM executive.

In a 2001 letter to IPM, Arenda Urban Poor Federation president Avelino de las Alas claimed for several months the area was submerged in water.

The Department of Public Works and Highways, for its part, affirmed that Taytay, among other Rizal coastal towns, suffered the "most serious damage from frequent flooding, usually brought about by their low elevation and overbanking of rivers and drainage channels."

De las Alas also cited results of soil tests, purportedly conducted by a University of the Philippines-environmental engineering team, which assured "the low grade compost (from Smokey Mountain) is stable and safe."

THE LLDA says this is an "illegal land reclamation," referring to squatter huts sitting on what used to be a portion of the Laguna de Bay basin.

> Worse, the alleged illegal land reclamation in the lake's northwestern fringes continues, said reports reaching the LLDA

Sometime in May 2001, permits were issued to IPM by Taytay Mayor June Zapanta and barangay Sta. Ana chair Vener Eustaquio.

But unlike the DPWH, the LLDA is not happy with developments at Lupang Arenda which it once described as "not fit for human habitation."

To date, the LLDA has yet to issue a clearance to any firm engaged in waste management activities in the area.

Dumping of garbage and other waste materials on shoreland is strictly prohibited, asserted LLDA general manager Calixto Cataquiz who called the issue "one of our problems."

Stressing the activity was detrimental to lake ecology, Cataquiz warned that "leachate from dumped garbage could seep into water reserves and eventually flow into Laguna de Bay."

In 1996, the LLDA issued Resolution 23 which banned garbage dumping on lake shoreland. Its strict enforcement, however, "remains a challenge to LLDA," said Cataquiz.

Earlier, the LLDA ruling was virtually ignored by the Environmental Management Bureau, another agency under the DENR, when it gave IPM the go-ahead for the transfer of some 500,000 cubic meters of Smokey Mountain materials to Lupang Arenda.

In June 2001, then EMB director Peter Anthony Abaya even lauded the IPM activity. In a memo, he told IPM "such an undertaking is very timely, taking into account the tragedy that befell the Payatas dumpsite which claimed the lives of hundreds of people."

Abaya, now assistant secretary of the Office of Development Assistance, said the DENR was "very much aware of the potential danger posed by the existing vertical slope of the (Payatas) dump. In fact, the plan to transport the stabilized waste off-site has been approved way back in 1998 (by the Smokey Mountain Reclamation and Development Project executive panel)."

The DENR memo also called for the adoption of sound waste management practices during the transfer of Smokey Mountain waste to Lupang Arenda:

- Application of engineering measures in IPM's scraping activity to ensure that proper slope was achieved at all times;
- Plastics, glass and other nonbiodegradable materials should not be present in the filling materials; and
- Ensure nonspillage of waste materials while hauling trucks were in transit.

Safe filling material

About the same time Lupang Arenda folk asked for filling materials, IPM was contracted by the Metro Manila Development Authority to rehabilitate the decades-old Tondo dumpsite.

"The problem was where to bring the Smokey Mountain garbage, which was already stabilized waste and certified as safe filling material. It's not fresh garbage. It's been there for more than 20 years," Ramos clarified.

IPM's activity in Taytay ran for about six months. "When the (P30-million) funding ran out, we also stopped our operation. We just scratched the surface in Smokey Mountain where there's still more than 500,000 cubic meters of stabilized garbage, said Macabidang.

During its Lupang Arenda operation, IPM used its fleet of heavy equipment, including 120 10-wheeler Isuzu dump trucks, 15 mini dump trucks, 4 rear-loading compactor trucks, 56 backhoes/excavators and 31 bulldozers/crawler tractors.

IPM is also involved in converting the Payatas open dumpsite into a controlled facility, which costs the Quezon City government about P6 million a month.

IPM's other clients include the Ninoy Aquino International Airport complex, Asian Development Bank in Mandaluyong and the city governments of Pasig and Marikina.

A sister firm, IPM Realty & Development Corp., has undertaken real estate projects like the 120-ha. Northfield Residential Resort in Malolos, Bulacan; the 40-ha. Tropical Greens in Tagaytay City; and the Lee Gardens Twin Towers condominium in Mandaluyong.

IPM, which began in the early 1980s hauling and trading construction materials, has also been involved in various phases of development projects of firms like Robinsons Land Corp., SM Prime Holdings, Daiichi Properties, Megaworld, Jardine Properties and Rockwell Land Corp.

Preempting termite invasion of your newly built house

THEY say in making life's biggest decisions, it pays to heed those in the know of what works best or doesn't work at all. The same principle applies to owning a home. An expert's advice carries a lot of weight in tending to the nitty gritty details in pre and post construction especially if it involves termite control.

Rodolfo D. Angeles is one person who knows about protecting one's home from termites. He ventured into the pest control business in 1966 and a year later he established his own firm, Phax Pest Control. In March 1997, Angeles along with his wife Nene set up the Metropolitan Pest Control Corp.

MPCC is a family corporation and Angeles is at present the president and general manager. Its main thrust is to provide highly efficient termite control as well as general pest control services to customers in dire need of protecting their homes against recurrent infestation. Angeles prides in MPCC's quality of services they provide and stresses that transparency is a key to building a good relationship with their clients.

He said the longevity of a home is not only dependent on the quality of design and structure but also providing a sound termite treatment before and after construction.

Ensuring safety

In termite infestation, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Angeles agrees: "It's like preventing one from getting sick. It is best to let a licensed pest control operator to do the job to ensure safety."

MPCC is one that puts safety as well as quality as top priorities in termite control before and after construction so it has established rigid standards in training their technical staff. "Every technician must meet our standards. If not, they would have to undergo continuous training until they are ready." Having well-trained technicians is important for MPCC to achieve quality results.

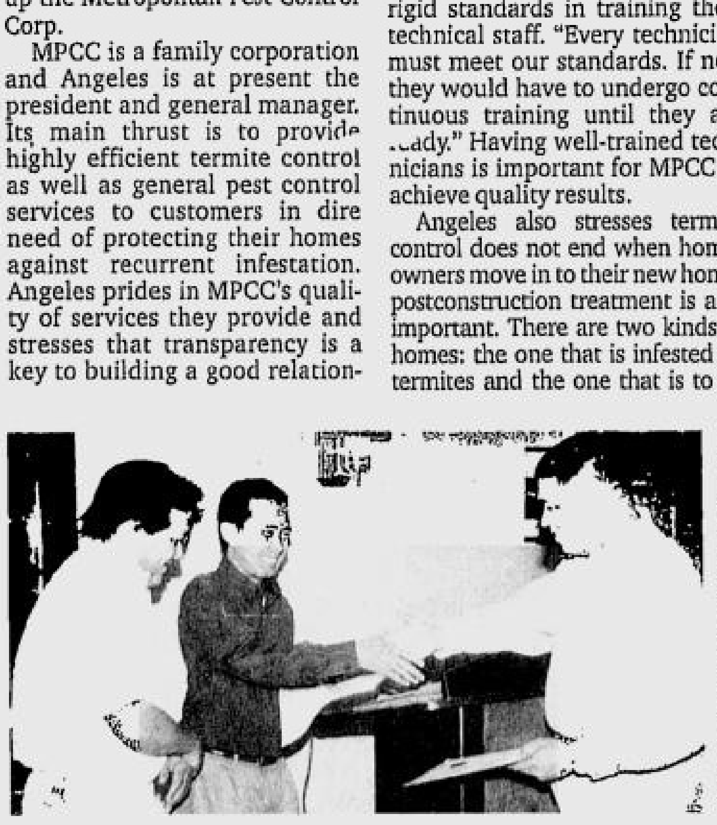
Angeles also stresses termite control does not end when homeowners move in to their new home, postconstruction treatment is also important. There are two kinds of homes: the one that is infested by termites and the one that is to be infested by termites. So, treatment must be applied even if there are no signs of termites yet.

Customer satisfaction

MPCC ensures quality of service rendered. "Customer satisfaction is very important to us. Giving prompt after-sales service is one of our main concerns."

Being in the pest control industry for many years has taught Angeles how to effectively handle problems about the pesky termite. His expert advice to both new and old homeowners? Get long-term termite protection with Dursban Termiticide Concentrate. Dursban, an effective termiticide, is known to successfully eliminate termites with its potent treatment before and after construction.

Manufactured by Dow AgroSciences, Dursban offers absolute termite protection and affordable even for medium low-budget household. What's more, Dursban may be lethal to termites but is safe on people and house pets when proper procedures for use are followed. The chemical used is biodegradable so it yields readily when exposed to light and air.



LOT TITLE AWARDING
Edar Ridge Farm recently held the awarding of lot titles to early buyers at the Manila Polo Club. Located in Sto. Tomas, Batangas, it is owned, conceived and managed by EAII Corp., one of the leading property developers. Edar Ridge Farm offers 70 hectares of master-planned community. Early buyer Mario Liwag receives his lot title from EAII marketing manager Gil Delica as EAII board chair Archibald Po looks on.

Families do thrive in less than 100 sq m

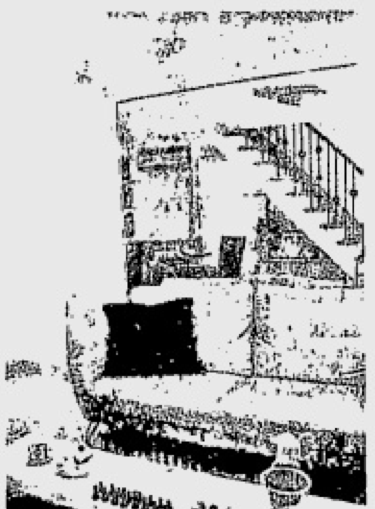
MOST media would have us believe that the best homes are necessarily airy mansions or ritzy condominiums. But the bulk of prospective homeowners in Metro Manila are mid-income families with budgets from P900,000 to P3 million for a house-and-lot package, according to studies by LPHI, an Ayala Land subsidiary specializing in affordable housing.

Realistically, these would afford them homes with floor areas of less than 100 square meters, a comfortable size for growing families, according to US-trained interior designer Grace Milan. The designer who has projects in Luzon as well as the Visayas has studied homes in LPHI's Sta. Catalina Village in Southern Metro Manila. She concludes: "Quality of life is not directly proportional to one's floor area." What's crucial, she points out, is to wisely plan a family's intimate milieu.

Brisk sales

Guided by LPHI's keen reading of what most prospective homeowners in Metro Manila want, the company has in fact been briskly selling homes in Sta. Catalina Village ranging from 33 sq m to 97 sq m. In less than five months, 447 house-and-lot packages in the 41-hectare subdivision were sold mostly last year. A great part of its success is its location 20 minutes from the Ayala Alabang community developed by LPHI parent company, Ayala Land.

With the opening of Daang Hari Road, a new access route which connects the Alabang-Zapote Road and the Zapote-Molino Road along which the development is located, the drive will even be shorter. The warm reception for Sta. Catalina homes which offer an easy drive to Makati prompted the opening of a new phase in March 2003.



MULTIPLE windows, high ceilings and clever design allow for cozy living with less than 50-sq.-m floor area.

Milan and her team at GMM Designs has come up with five model units with various decorating themes to help homeowners visualize a comfortable and cozy family life within a range of floor areas below 100 sq m.

What a home should have

She discusses specific factors that a home—regardless of size—should have so it provides a healthy environment for a growing family.

"A flexible layout allows more options. The simplest way to determine if a layout plan is flexible, says Milan, is to see if the living spaces allow more than one way to position important furniture as is the case with Sta. Catalina homes. These include the sofa in the living room and the beds in the bedrooms. Moreover, the best plan for a limited space is an open one with as few partitions and dividers as possible. This usually means that the living, dining and kitchen areas share a common space with sheer or light-scale dividers that allow one to view the expanse.

"Multiple windows and high ceilings provide a sense of well-being. A home with as many windows as possible and high ceilings is always a boon. This not only means that the house will be cool since air can circulate freely as in all Sta. Catalina models. It also implies that most areas will be well-lit and allow those who live there a sense of well-being. *"Iba talaga ang maaliwalas,"* says Milan.

Priority investments

"Nonmovable items should be priority investments. When funds are limited, Milan advises homeowners to invest first in the nonmovable parts of a home e.g. flooring, kitchen and bathroom tiles. This is because it becomes more difficult and expensive to upgrade these fixtures once one has moved into a home. The remainder of the budget can be used for simple draperies, beds, furniture and other movable fixtures which can be upgraded when the family income increases.

"There is wisdom in simplicity. In a small home, says Milan, it is best to keep furnishings and furniture simple. For the Sta. Catalina model units, for instance, she uses sheers and simple shades as window treatments as well as light-scale furniture that make use of clean lines, slats and other devices that keep these furnishings from overpowering a room. No heavy drapes; no bulky beds or sofas with heavy legs. To update the homes, she merely chooses accents such as ornate mirror frames—with gold carvings in the romantic shabby chic home; in dark Asian woods in the Asian contemporary home—to communicate a unifying theme.

Ponderosa's garden of flowers

By Charles E. Buban

MARIA Luisa Perez-Rubio with her creations at Ponderosa's Ornamental Nursery.

IMAGINE exquisite flower-lined pathways, trellised walkways and Mexican-Spanish inspired houses speckled with bougainvilleas, bromeliads, orange, pink and purple roses.

These are what one can expect at Ponderosa Leisure Farms, the latest exclusive flower garden village from Landco Pacific Corp.

Located just an hour's away from Metro Manila, Ponderosa in Silang, Cavite is designed as a family place where one can enjoy life's modern amenities, theme gardens, demo gardens, and of course, farm services that offer hassle-free gardening for residents.

"Ponderosa is a rustic village where one can find nothing but the best. I want people to live in here, relax and enjoy God's creation—it will be a garden to be used and experienced, not just to look at from a distance," says Lando Pacific's Alfred Xerez-Burgos III.

This is the idea behind Landco Pacific's second Leisure Farms project (the first one, called simply Leisure Farms in Batangas is the country's first residential hobby farming and agro-tourism development), which targets mainly hobby farmers, or those who work during the week and come to the farm on weekend not to work but to enjoy life's leisure.

"But if Landco Pacific's first Leisure Farms was about hobby farming—using a Filipino architecture theme—Ponderosa, on the other hand is a Mexican-Spanish residential garden village," Burgos explains.

The Mexican-Spanish village theme is Maria Luisa Perez-Rubio's idea, Landco Pacific's partner in Ponderosa.

"She wanted to give the place a Mexican country feel, as the place is on rolling hills and all, aside from the fact that Mexico and the Philippines have a lot in common, thanks to vast exchanges of art and culture," says Burgos.

Ponderosa by the way, is derived from the name of a pine tree and a chico tree, one of the plant species most loved by Rubio.

For garden lovers

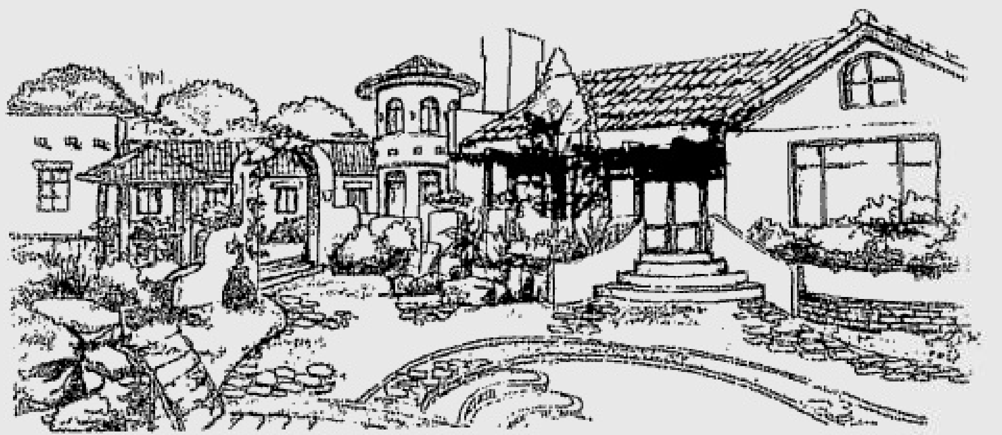
When Ponderosa held its groundbreaking in October, it has opened its doors to garden lovers, particularly in the city.

Houses to be built at Ponderosa will take in a hacienda-type concept, complete with fountains, breezy windows, courtyard, tiled roofs, bright pinks, oranges and blues that are so Mexican in colors.

"If you love flowers, this 53-hectare property (offering lots of around 1,000 sq m) along the gently rolling hills of barangays Ulat and Pasong Langka in Silang, Cavite is the perfect place to indulge with them," assures Burgos.

But apart from the gardens, Ponderosa also have various areas where residents can go to:

- Villa Ponderosa has a clubhouse with all the urban conveniences where one can relax and enjoy.
- Campo Verde is a campsite—complete with picnic areas, nature trails and barbeque pits—an ideal place to spend quality leisure time with loved ones and friends.
- El Sanctuario is a themed garden that awakens the senses and enjoy the beauty of nature.
- Las Rosas is an outdoor dining in a rustic Mexican-Spanish setting, with soothing views of fields of flowers and Ponderosa's Village Center.
- Plaza Maravilla is a village center where the village store, flower and produce market, food and retail stores, nursery and outdoor dining are located.


VILLA Ponderosa Clubhouse

James Hardie pre-Xmas treat sweetens sales in ongoing promo

WITH CHRISTMAS just around the corner, fiber cement leader James Hardie Philippines Inc., in cooperation with Jollibee, has come up with "Kwarta Kada Board," a promo that will give buyers of HardiFlex, HardiFlex Lite and HardiFlex Lite Pro a chance to win cold, tax-free cash—to better celebrate the Yuletide season with.

James Hardie's previous promo, "Buy A Board, Fly Abroad" sent lucky HardiFlex buyers on all-expense-paid trips to Bangkok, Hong Kong and the United States, among other incentives.

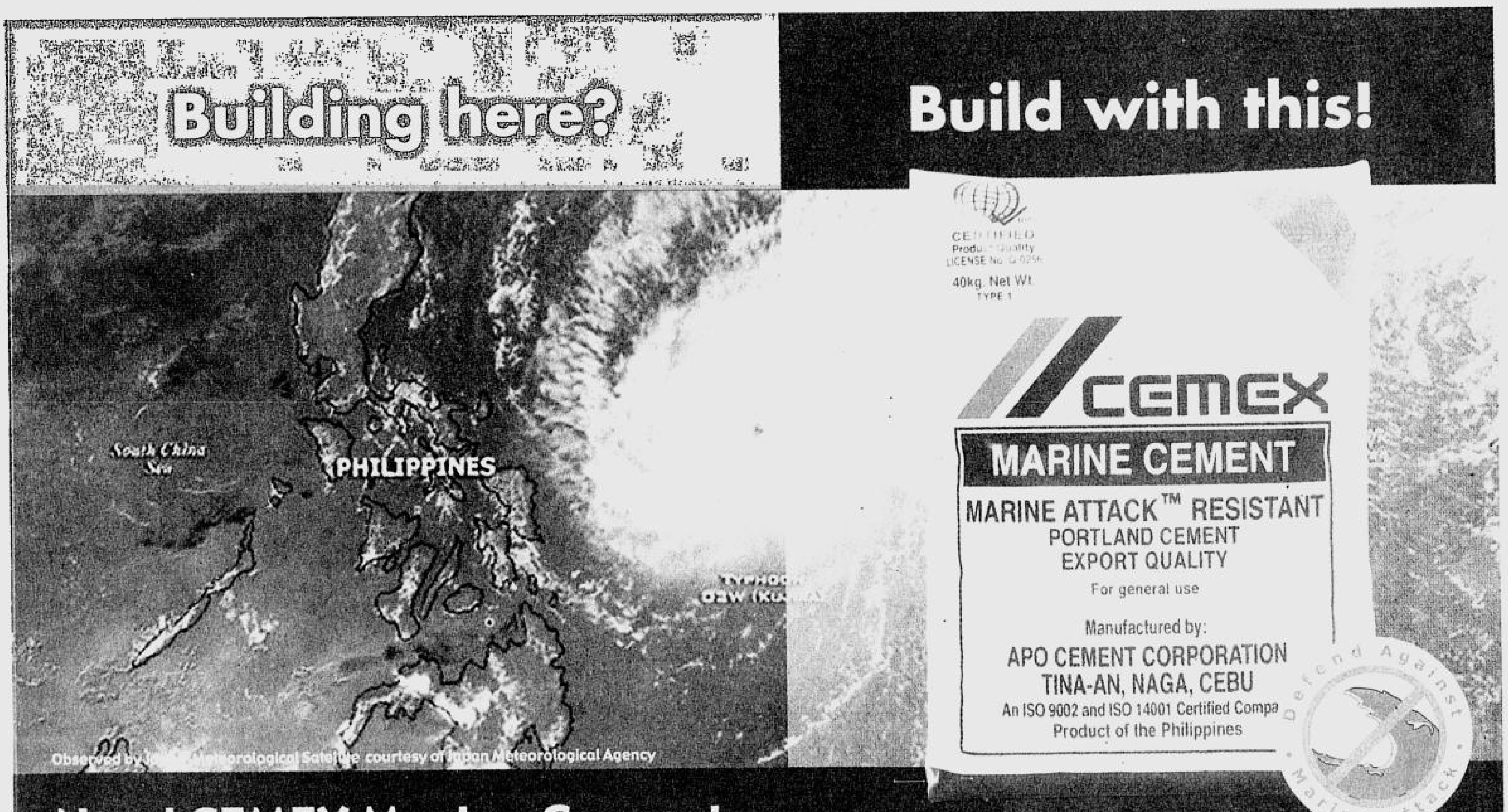
But cash or free trips aside, the bigger prize is the product itself. HardiFlex has attributes that make it a cost-effective building solution, giving homeowners value for money. Made from cement, sand and wood fiber from replenishable forests, it does not warp or rot with age. Its density makes it a breeze to paint. Unlike plywood, HardiFlex is water-resistant, termite-proof and fire-resistant. It also doesn't contain asbestos.

Participating James Hardie products are HardiFlex Lite; HardiFlex 4.5 mm, 6.0 mm, 9.0 mm and 12.0 mm; and HardiFlex Lite Pro 4.5 mm, 6.0 mm, 9.0 mm and 12.0 mm.

According to Hardie marketing manager Junie Rondon, James Hardie has simplified the process of joining "Kwarta Kada Board" by awarding a coupon for every official receipt (OR) or delivery receipt (DR) instead of the usual coupon for every board or product purchased. Participating James Hardie products are HardiFlex Lite; HardiFlex 4.5 mm, 6.0 mm, 9.0 mm and 12.0 mm; and HardiFlex Lite Pro 4.5 mm, 6.0 mm, 9.0 mm and 12.0 mm.

If there is more than one coupon per OR or DR, those entries will be voided. The OR or DR will be the basis for the amount of prize money the winner is entitled to receive.

VIVANT FLATS AT CORPORATE CITY
Filinvest Alabang Inc. has unveiled Vivant Flats, a 17-story residential tower at the Corporate City, and named CE Construction as the general contractor and TCGI engineers as the construction manager for the project. FAI vice president Erlinda Tan and Vivant Flats project team head Christopher Calibo, second and third from left, present the scale model of Vivant Flats to TCGI president Virgilio Madrazo and Cecon VP for operations Rolando Magsalin.



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BUILDING DREAMS

How a subdivision is made

By Alexis A. Acacio, Ph.D.

(Last of two parts)

LAST week's article covered the design aspects of a subdivision. This week covers the various construction processes that are followed to make the detailed design plans a reality. The main process and subprocesses include:

Actual construction

After all of the detailed design plans are complete and the necessary government permits are obtained, the actual construction may now take place. The following processes are followed:

- **Mobilization**—The contractor mobilizes equipment and crew for the project. To be constructed are temporary facilities which include field offices, staff houses, stockyards, storerooms, medical offices and even recreational facilities. For large development projects, an on-site concrete batching plant is sometimes constructed.
- **Clearing and Grubbing**—The site is cleared of any obstructions and undesirable material. For large subdivision projects, heavy equipment such as bulldozers, payloaders and dump trucks are needed. Some areas also require the demolition of existing facilities. Some sites contain waste materials that are harmful to the environment and should be disposed of properly.
- **Site Grading**—The raw land is now ready to be shaped according to the master development plan. Some areas are cut, and some areas are filled with soil. The objective of the development is to have a well-contoured area. For some developments of low lying and flood prone areas, soil has to be imported to the site in order to increase the elevation of the houses to ensure that floodwater, if any, will not enter the subdivision. It is always economically advantageous to balance cut and fill in which the amount of fill is more or less equal to the amount of cut. Thus, hauling out or bringing in fill material is avoided and can substantially reduce the cost of development.
- **Roads and Sidewalks**—After the site is prepared, the roads and sidewalks are then constructed. These are usually the first structures to be constructed in a development.
- **Water Supply Facilities**—The construction of water supply facilities follow. Main water lines are placed along the major roads while the smaller water lines connect to the houses. If water is not available with the local water district, subdivision deep wells and elevated water tanks are built.
- **Drainage and Flood Control Facilities**—Without adequate drainage, the area can easily get flooded. The construction of drainage and flood control facilities consisting of sewer lines, open canals and even bridge facilities is done.
- **Wastewater Treatment Plants**—With the recent environmental laws and regulations, sewage water may have to be treated before it can be pumped back to creeks and the ground. In this way, contamination of groundwater will be avoided. Water treatment plants cost money but are required to maintain a clean and healthy environment.
- **Electrical Supply Facilities**—Electrical facilities can either be exposed (with posts and wire above the ground) or underground. The advantage of underground electrical systems is that they do not obstruct the view of the subdivision structures. These advantages may be negated by the higher costs involved.
- **Construction of Structures**—The clubhouse, open parks, playgrounds, swimming pools, basketball courts and the like are constructed.
- **Construction of Houses**—After the facilities are completed, the construction of individual housing facilities can commence.

In the construction of the various structures described earlier, the builder, depending on the availability of equipment, materials and manpower may choose to build one infrastructure ahead of another and is a common practice. The most important aspect is the on time completion of the entire project to ensure that the end users will be able to use the structures on the promised delivery date. After the completion of the project, government permits to occupy and use the facilities are obtained.

Selling

After construction, selling of the properties can proceed. However, many properties are sold even before they are completed.

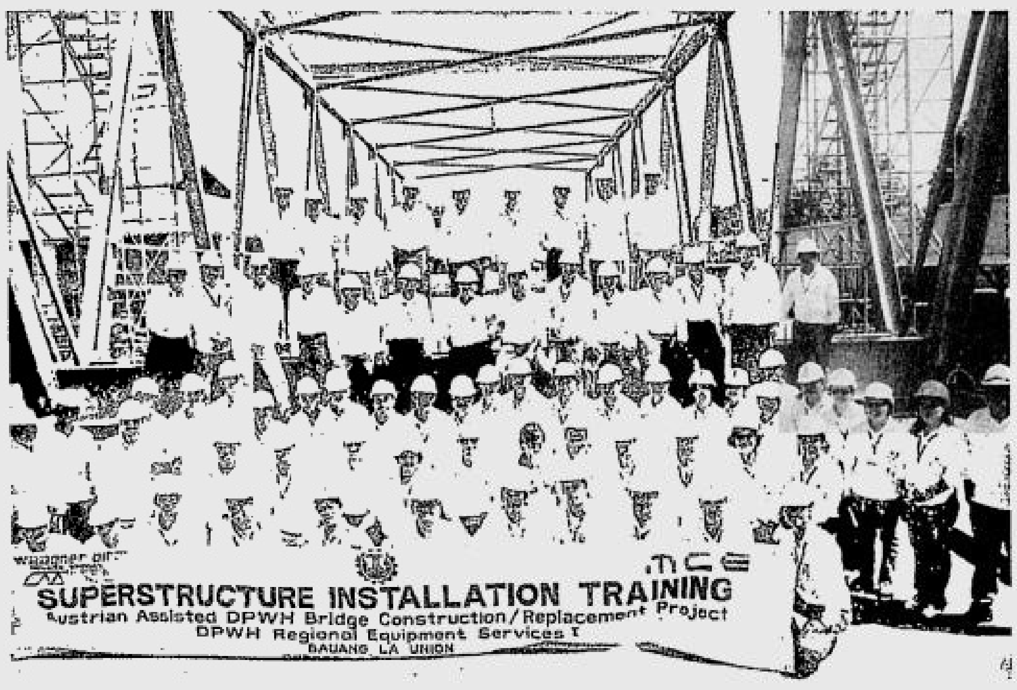
Selling real estate is not easy. If it is a large project that is being developed, the services of a reputable real estate marketing organization may prove to be very useful. These groups have a database of prospective clients not only whom they have served for several years but also whom they specifically know their specific needs and wants. Using their services will also relieve the developer the tasks of showing the pieces of property and following up clients so that they can concentrate more on the quality and on time completion of the project.

Final Note. A subdivision may look simple but the real estate investor has to go through a lot of processes in order to complete the project. The process takes time to finish and can span for several years.

The process of subdivision development is not simple and requires the knowledge and expertise of many professionals. If one simply owns the land and would not want to face all of the headaches that come with development, then engaging in a joint venture with a reputable developer can be one of the better development options. One just has to make sure that the details of the agreement are clear and concise to both parties.

XAVIER HILLS 62% COMPLETE

Xavier Hills, a four-cluster project of housing developer Empire East Land Holdings Inc., has reached the 62 percent completion mark. Installation of doors and windows, wall partition and interior finishing works are under way as well as exterior masonry, loft framing installation and plastering works. These follow the completion of roofing and exterior masonry works for Cluster 1, 2 and 3 and the topping off of Cluster 4 at the 17th level. Bounded by Granada and N. Domingo streets in New Manila, Xavier Hills features executive two-bedroom homes and special luxury two-bedroom suites among its 524 residences.


SUPERSTRUCTURE INSTALLATION TRAINING
Austrian Assisted DPWH Bridge Construction/Replacement Project
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SUPERSTRUCTURE INSTALLATION TRAINING

Some 60 engineers from 10 regional offices of the Department of Public Works and Highways recently underwent a five-day hands-on training program conducted by Waagner Biro Philippines Inc. on behalf of the Austrian Bridges Consortium WB + MCE at the DPWH's Regional Equipment Services depot in Bauang, La Union. Also shown are DPWH director Elsie Joson, WBPI president Helmut Wuzela, WB Bruckenbau AG chair Horst Kuebel, VP for administration and finance Ligaya Borcena, VP for operations Herbert Maier and project manager Albin Koenigshofer.

Property management, appraisal seminar slated

URBAN Institute will conduct a seminar titled "Property Management and Practical Property Valuation" on Dec. 6, from 1:30 to 6 p.m. at the Asian Institute Of Management Conference Center, Benavidez corner Trasierra Streets, Legaspi Village, Makati City.

"Introduction To Property Management" will cover these topics: the property management functions, objectives, organization and designations, management contract, important provisions on lease contracts, tenant selection, property maintenance, insurance and other related subjects.

"Practical Property Valuation" will include the following subtopics: needs for appraisal, principles of real estate values, factors that influence real estate values, data collection and verification, appraisal methods, market data approach, cost approach, income approach, site valuation, and preparation of appraisal reports.

For details, Urban Institute may be reached at 681-0928 or at e-mail urbanet@pacific.net.ph.

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BUSINESS

RP, Taiwan move to resolve trade issues

By Abigail L. Ho

THE TAIWANESE government is "receptive" to the Philippines' request to have its ban on young coconut exports from the country lifted, Trade Secretary Manuel Roxas II said.

In a statement, Roxas said that a recent survey conducted by the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) showed that coconuts from Laguna, Batangas and Cavite were not infected by the cadang-cadang viroid.

The survey seemed to have convinced the Taiwanese authorities to lift the ban on Philippine young coconut exports.

The PCA had earlier reported that the cadang-cadang viroid was plaguing coconut farms in the Bicol region, parts of Aurora and Quezon provinces as well as Eastern Samar.

Because of the contagious nature of the coconut disease, the Taiwanese government imposed a ban on Philippine young coconut exports. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Hong Kong imposed similar bans.

But Roxas said the Taiwanese government had already expressed willingness to lift the ban on coconut exports, at least for young coconuts from Laguna, Batangas and Cavite.

"We will (also) be sending experts to Taipei for deeper discussions with their counterparts to resolve sanitary and phyto-sanitary issues for papaya, mango and banana from the Philippines," he said.

Also, the Taiwanese government is also working toward resolving visa issues with the Philippine government.

"We are extending business visas from six months to one year while Taiwan will extend visas from one month to six months for (information technology) professionals on a case-to-case basis. Both sides welcome these developments," Roxas said.

Another issue being resolved right now is one concerning water rates in the Subic Bay freeport area that Taiwanese investors had earlier raised.

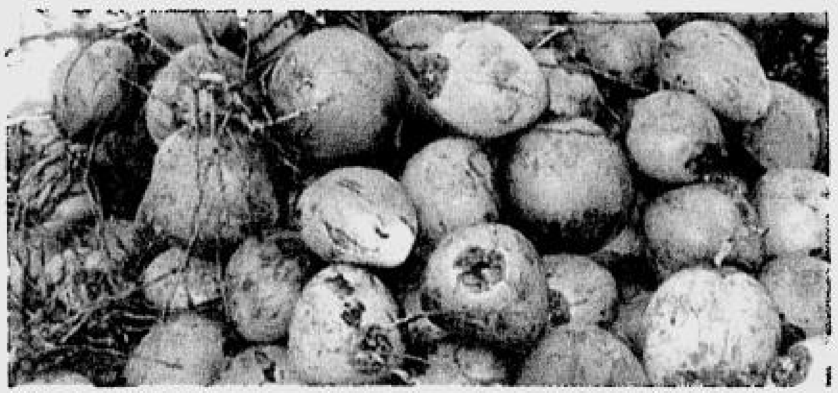
Roxas said the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority, Subic Bay Development and Management Corp. and the Board of Investments had come up with compromise rates as well as agreements on how penalties and interests on past due payables would be paid for by the Taiwanese locators in the area.

From P32 per cubic meter, water rates at the freeport zone are now down to P20 per cubic meter.

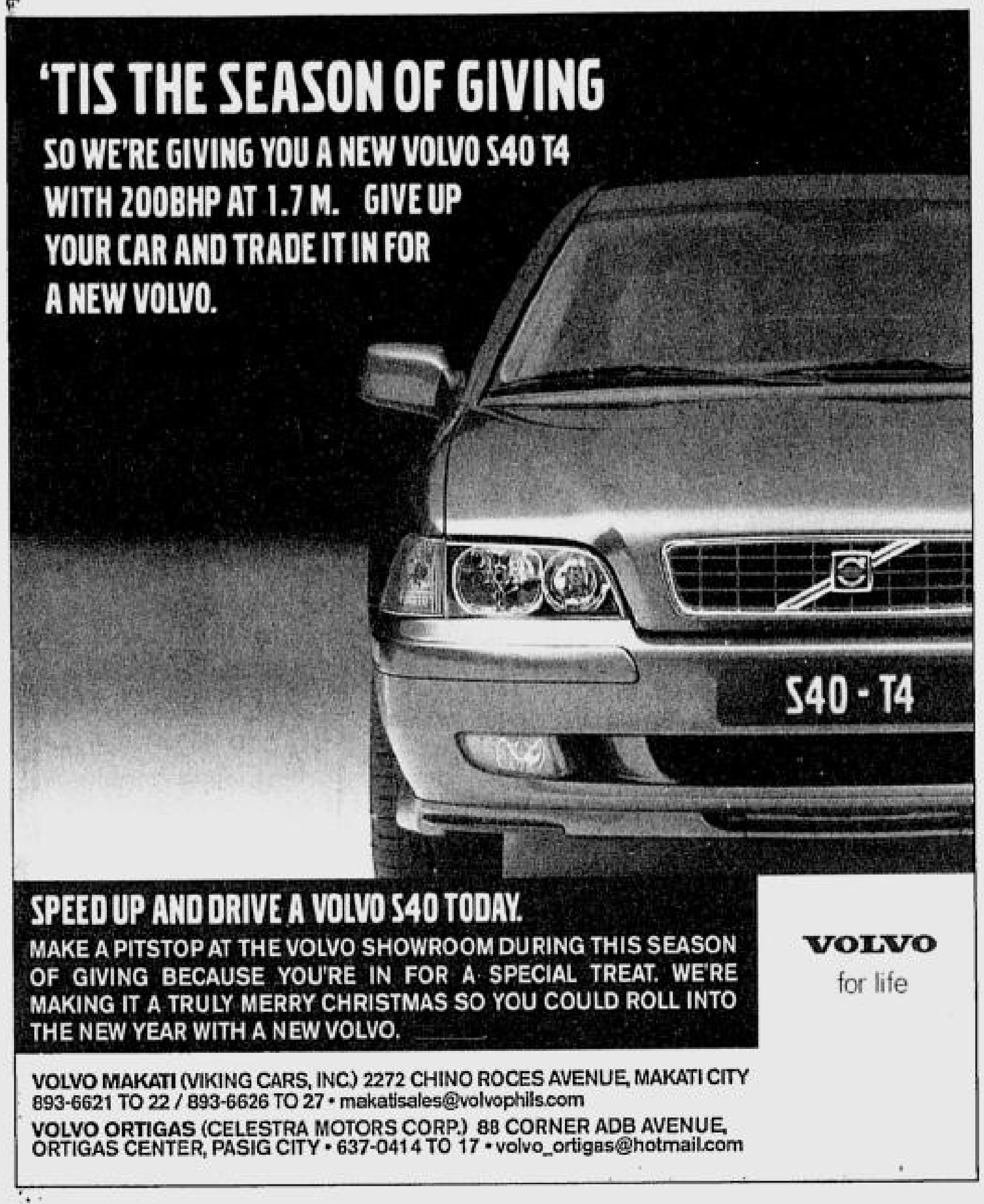
Roxas said the SBDMC was also studying a new package for land rental rates, as well as proposing trade facilitating measures between Subic and Kaoshiung and other Taiwanese free ports.

While moving toward resolving various issues between them, the Philippine and Taiwanese governments had also signed a memorandum of understanding on trade promotions and industrial development cooperation, specifically for major export products.

Roxas said Taiwan had committed support for the country's food processing and semiconductor industries.



EXPORTATION of coconut to Taiwan hoped to resume soon.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Food exporters told to upgrade manufacturing facilities, systems

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE AGRICULTURE department has urged food exporters to the United States and the European Union to upgrade their manufacturing systems following the implementation of stricter product standards.

The DA said the US and the EU were expected to require all food exporters to secure a Hazard Analysis Control Point (HACCP) certification starting next year.

HACCP aims to minimize and control biological and chemical hazards in food by identifying potential sources of risk in food production, from the sourcing of raw materials to the production process itself.

The Philippines' top agricultural exports to the US and the EU that might be affected by the new product certification requirement include fresh bananas, coconut oil, manufactured fertilizer, pineapple and pineapple products, copra oil, sugar, desiccated coconut, tuna, seaweeds and carrageenan, fresh mangoes and shrimps and prawns.

Among the risks that threaten food safety are the presence of bacteria, viruses, yeast and mold, parasites, pests and insects. Other risks include the cross contamination of raw and cooked foods during transport, storage, preparation and cooking; inadequate cleaning of equipment; poor standards of personal hygiene and insufficient cooking.

The HACCP certification would cover food manufacturing, food catering and other services, food packing materials and medical devices.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have already adopted HACCP as the basic sanitary standard for food.

The DA, however, estimated that it would cost local food processing firms at least $3,000 annually to secure the HACCP certification, which could be too expensive for small and medium enterprises.

"Most SMEs in the Philippines could not afford this (cost of certification) and we are now working on how this could be lowered," the DA said.

Farmers oppose 400% hike in cigarette tax

By Michelle V. Remo

A GROUP of tobacco farmers has sought the scrapping of a revenue regulation that increases the taxes on new cigarette brands for fear of losing the bulk of their income.

In a motion filed with the Paranaque Trial Court, the Philippine Association of Tobacco-based Cooperatives Inc. (Patco) said it was supporting La Suerte Cigar and Cigarette Factory in questioning the legality of the Revenue Regulation No. 22-2003.

The regulation increases the taxes on new cigarette brands by 400 percent.

La Suerte, maker of new cigarette brands Memphis and Astro, recently asked the court to issue an injunction barring the implementation of RR No. 22-2203. It claimed the new regulation was unconstitutional because it singled out new cigarette brands in increasing the taxes, leaving old brands to enjoy the old tax rates. This, it claimed, created an unfair playing field.

New cigarette brands are those introduced in the market after the revised National Internal Revenue Code took effect in October 1997.

"The revenue regulation is unconstitutional because it violates the rule that taxation should be uniform and equitable," said Patco in its motion, citing Article VI of the 1987 Constitution.

The group said the implementation of the revenue regulation was seen to gravely affect its about 45,000 farmer-members and their families because La Suerte was their biggest buyer of tobacco.

Patco said that for cropping season 2002-2003, La Suerte bought 15 million kilos of Virginia and Burley Tobacco from the farmers in Northern Luzon.

It said that a significant reduction in the demand for tobacco would result in a sudden drop in its prices and thus result in huge losses for the farmers.

La Suerte earlier said it was buying almost 50 percent of the tobacco production of the farmers in Northern Luzon.

La Suerte had already stopped the production of the Astro and Memphis brands, whose taxes were increased by 400 percent after the issuance of RR No. 22-2003.

La Suerte said the resulting increase in prices made Astro and Memphis uncompetitive.

The higher tax rate of P5.60 per pack-which is much more than the previous rate of P1.12 per pack-increased the prices of Astro and Memphis to about P12, or higher than the P7 to P8 of their counterpart brands.

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When is the best time to exercise?

Part 2

WELL AND GOOD

Tina Juan

EXERCISE physiologist Richard Cotton of ACE told CNN that afternoon exercise might be a good way to prevent injury and get maximum performance, but he said the most important thing is a consistent exercise regimen.

Studies have shown that morning exercisers are more likely to stick to their exercise programs than people who exercise in the afternoon or evening. This is probably because as the day goes on, it is too easy to start making excuses why you can't exercise—your last meeting ran overtime, you feel too tired after a long day in the office, there is too much traffic, etc.

Other health experts interviewed by CNN said if people preferred to exercise in the morning, they just needed to spend a few minutes warming up to prevent injury.

Can morning exercise make you sick?

Dr. Lygeri Dimitriou of Brunel University, London, caused a bit of controversy in the athletic world when he suggested morning exercise could make athletes more prone to infection.

Dimitriou studied 14 professional swimmers and he found the stress hormone cortisol was at its highest level in the morning while the chemical IgA was at its lowest.

Cortisol weakens the immune system while IgA helps to destroy infections in the air, so Dimitriou concluded that people could be at a higher risk of infection if they exercised in the morning. However, other experts disagree.

Dr. Brian English, chief medical officer of UK Athletics, told BBC News, "Athletes exercise when they feel their bodies are ready. And these are professional athletes, they know their bodies extremely well. They will know when their mental and physical circadian rhythms are at their highest."

English also said average persons could choose whatever time they wanted to exercise. "People tend to find their own time for exercising, when they feel best," he explained.

BBC also spoke to David Sparkes of the Amateur Swimming Association who said, "We shouldn't leap to conclusions; it is a very small group tha t has been looked at. Our opinion is you do your exercise when you feel comfortable. Professional swimmers train in the morning as they have a big volume to get through. And any exercise is better than none."

Greater risk of heart attacks in the morning?

Although it is true that there is an increased incidence of heart attacks during the hours of 6 a.m. to noon, this should not discourage morning exercisers.

Morning exercise does not increase the risk of heart attack in the morning, according to Dr. Paul Thompson, M.D., director of preventive cardiology at Miriam Hospital in Rhode Island. In his study of 15,000 joggers, Thompson found only one death from cardiac arrest per year.

If you have a history of heart disease or you have several risk factors, talk to your cardiologist if it is appropriate for you to exercise early in the morning.

Sleep problems and exercise timing

Studies have shown that exercise can help people who have sleep problems. But there have been conflicting results as to whether morning or afternoon exercise is better.

Dr. Shelley Tworoger of the Fred Hutchison Cancer Research Center in Seattle found that menopausal women between the ages of 50 and 75 years old did better with aerobic exercise at 10:30 a.m. compared to 6 p.m.

Study participants who did a stretching routine had fewer sleep improvements than the aerobic exercise group, but it did not matter whether they did their workout in the morning or evening.

Meanwhile, the Stanford University School of Medicine found that sedentary insomniacs between the ages of 55 and 75 experienced improvements in sleep by doing aerobic exercise in the afternoon. They were able to increase their sleep time by one hour and they reduced

WHEN/ C4

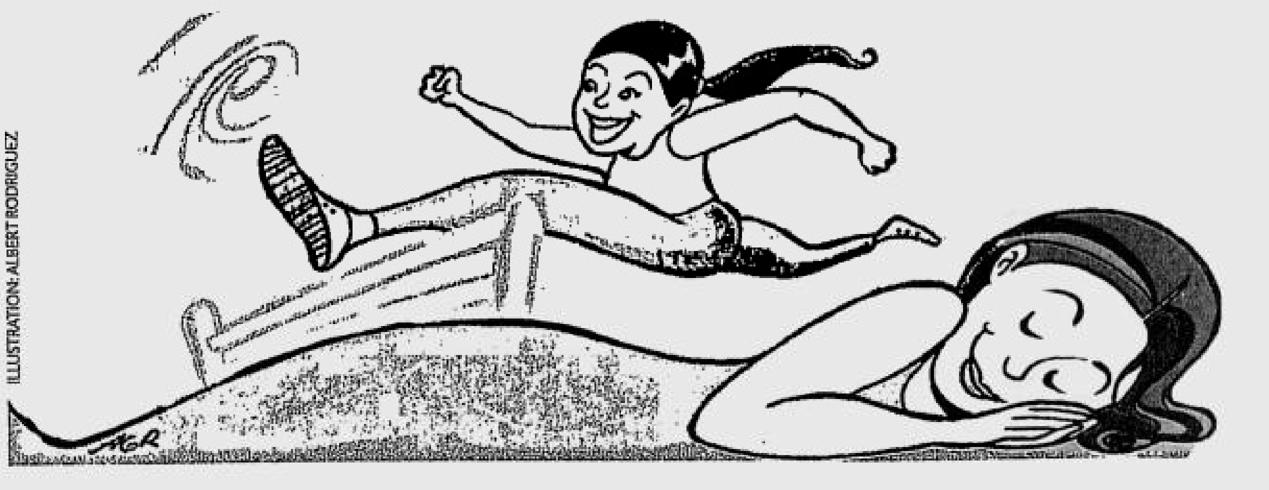
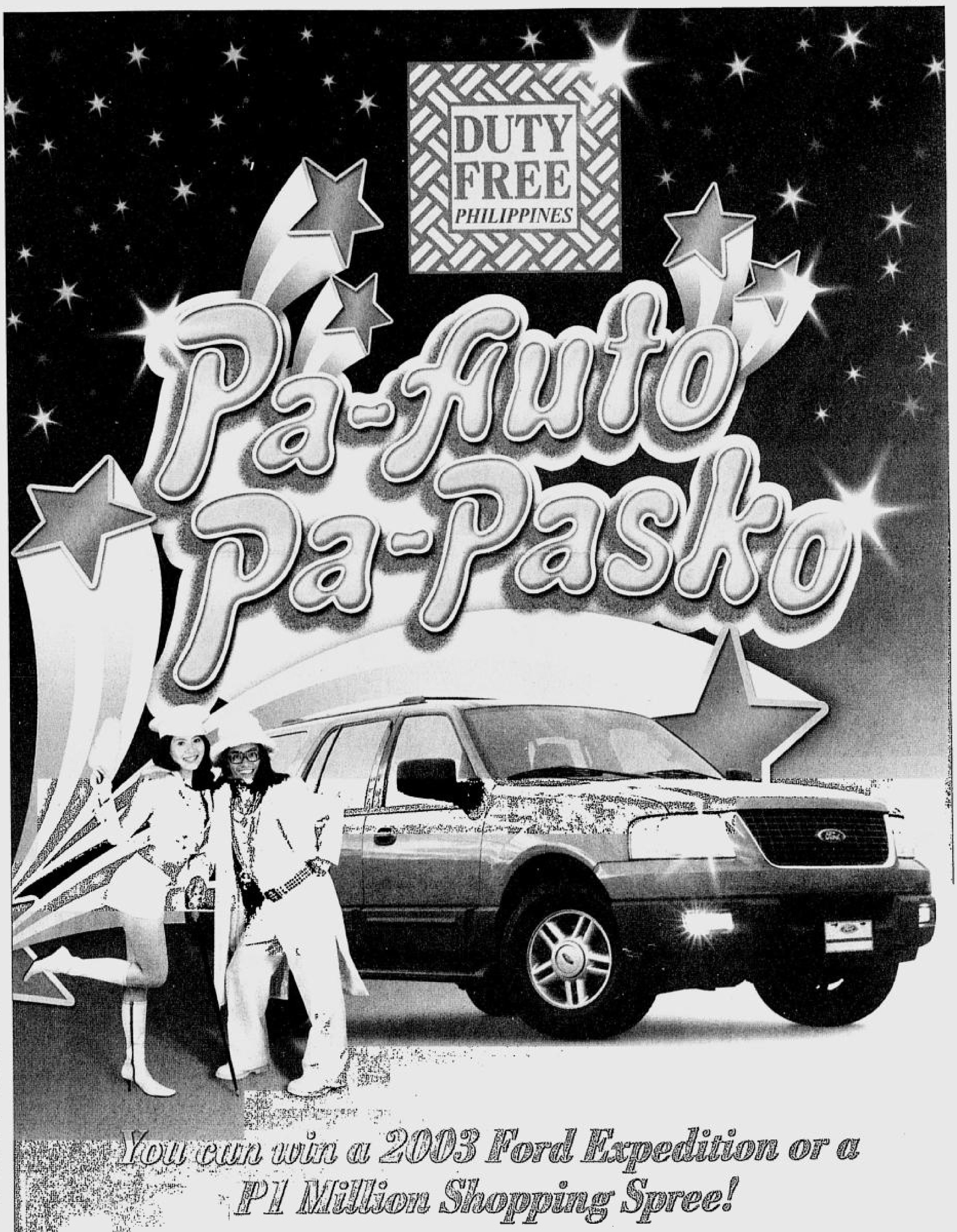


ILLUSTRATION: ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

Exercise improves sleep by producing a rise in body temperature, followed by a drop a few hours later, which is what makes you sleepy



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2. For every $100 worth of purchase, a customer will be entitled to one (1) raffle coupon.
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5. Only entries received on or before January 15, 2004 shall be qualified.
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7. One Million Peso Shopping Spree is in the form of Gift Certificates.
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DECEMBER 02 TUESDAY

Reconstructing beauty

Text by Alex Y. Vergara
Photos by Chito Vecina

Clinique Internationale d'Esthetique in Alabang offers the latest 'enhancement' procedures by French cosmetic surgeon Pierre Clero

WITH its imposing wooden gate that opens to a lush garden and a lotus pond featuring a statue of the Buddha, Clinique Internationale d'Esthetique may be easily mistaken by first-time visitors for one of those remote spas in Thailand or Bali.

Except that it's anything but a spa, as it offers the latest "enhancement" procedures by French cosmetic surgeon Pierre Clero.

Nor is the place, a former riding school, far removed from civilization, since it's tucked inside a quiet corner of Ayala Alabang (357 San Juanico St., tel. 8421818).

The tranquil, Zen-like atmosphere extends to the clinic's receiving area, where a mélange of East and West is reflected in the tastefully appointed furniture and accent pieces.

"Patients savor the privacy and sense of exclusivity the location offers," says Clero. "Those who live outside Ayala Alabang don't seem to mind driving all the way here."

Behind the receiving area's walls are a series of antiseptic treatment rooms where patients undergo whatever they feel needs to be corrected or enhanced—from routine botox injections to more invasive face lifts and liposuction.

The latter is still by far the most popular procedure for Filipinos who love to pig out but are often too lazy to burn those excess calories at the gym.'

"Liposuction isn't purely a cosmetic procedure," says Clero, who earned a medical degree in—believe it or not—neurosurgery at the University of Paris in 1977.

"I'm not saying people shouldn't exercise and watch what they eat. Exercising and going on a diet, however, have their limits. In some cases, liposuction is necessary to motivate and give the person a head start," he says.

When Clero decided to shift to cosmetic surgery, he trained and eventually worked with Brazilian surgeon Ivo Pitanguy in Rio de Janeiro, dubbed as the plastic surgery capital of the world.

Upon his return to Paris a few years later, he founded La Clinique d'Esthetique Raymond Poincare, where he specialized and further honed his skills in liposuction, body sculpting and skin rejuvenation treatments.

In fact, Clero claims to have pioneered the use of Aquamid in the country. Unlike botox, which works by relaxing certain facial muscles, especially those in the forehead and between the eyebrows, Aquamid is a filler injected into the skin to fill out depressed areas such as laugh lines and crows feet.

"Aquamid works similarly like collagen, but it's much safer to use," he says. "Beef-derived collagen somewhat lost its appeal after the mad cow scare. Aquamid is derived from synthetic sources."

Hair grafting

Clero has also gone beyond the face by targeting the hair. Together with Canadian doctor Pierre Bedard, Clero developed a restorative technology for hair grafting in Montreal, Canada. Dubbed as the Microfollicular Hair Grafting Technique, the procedure works by painstakingly transplanting healthy hair bulbs from a "donor" area to balding areas such as the crown and the hairline.

Since he opened his Ayala Alabang clinic a little over three years ago (with his Filipino wife), Clero, who still regularly shuttles between Paris and Manila, has been attending to a growing clientele of "follicularly" challenged men.

The current obsession among Filipino women to achieve lighter skin didn't escape him as well. He has developed his own cosmetics line—Clinique Raymond Poincare Cosmetics—especially formulated for skin rejuvenation and lightening.

SERENITY away from the madding crowd

EAST meets West at the clinic's receiving area.

Such treatments, and the years of training that Clero spent perfecting them, expectedly don't come cheap. The doctor charges from $500 for a simple dermatological procedure to as high as $5,000 for his signature hair grafting technique.

He still accepts pesos, but for the sake of convenience, he pegs his prices in dollars.

Despite Clinique Internationale d'Esthetique's snob appeal, Clero isn't shutting his doors to the mall market and Makati's working class. In fact, he'll be opening two clinics, one at the nearby Festival Mall and the other at RCBC Plaza in Makati, before the year ends.

Foreigners as well as Filipinos based abroad may also want to avail of Clero's services (www.cleroclinic.com). By coming up with so-called beauty packages, the doctor will be introducing a new form of tourism already practiced in such countries as Thailand and Singapore.

A typical package will include air fare, one-week stay at a five-star hotel and, of course, treatment at one of his clinics.

Tourists and *balikbayans* are sure to come out of the experience renewed both inside and out.

E-mail the author at avergara@inquirer.com.ph

DR. Pierre Clero

Nature's 'medicine cabinet' provides healthful products

By Belle V. Bondoc

VITAMINS, minerals and herbals are becoming part of many people's lives. They spend hundreds, even thousands (for imported items) of pesos on such products every year.

Food supplements are regularly marketed—to aid in the cure of cancer, a magical way to lose weight or to provide many extra special benefits.

With the wide array of vitamins, minerals and herbal products in the market today, how do ordinary consumers choose what vitamin is right for their daily needs? How do they know a product's side effects, if any?

Amway Phils., a global direct-selling company, not only aims to promote good health by introducing new products to meet different people's needs, but also makes sure consumers have all the information they need about the product.

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Company's commitment

In a press conference at the Amway Distributors' Center in Balintawak, QC recently, Amway Phils. reiterated its commitment to promote "good health."

Leni Olmedo, marketing and business director of Amway Phils., said it was the company's mission to harness the power of nature in developing health products using the most advanced technology. She emphasized the benefits of certified organic nutrition products like those offered by Amway's Nutrition for the Family.

"We at Amway are firm believers of the Nutrilite brand [one of the leading brands in vitamins, minerals and dietary supplements] and what it can do to improve the lives of Filipino families," Olmedo said.

Amway introduced the Nutrilite line in the Philippines through Nutrilite Daily, Nutrilite Calcium and Magnesium and Nutrilite Garlic and Licorice. Nutrilite Daily is now the best-selling product of Amway Phils., surpassing long-time leader Glister Toothpaste.

Nutrilite is the only global vitamin and mineral producer that grows, harvests and processes plants on its own certified organic farms—no chemicals or harsh farming techniques, synthetic herbicides or pesticides.

Its products are said to use plant concentrates and all-natural ingredients. Plant concentrates are harvested at their peak, and quickly processed to lock in the phytonutrients (phyto means of plant origin). The concentrates contain plants' natural nutrients and phytochemicals without the water. They provide a wide spectrum of phytonutrients—more than what synthetic vitamins provide.

Nutrilite products

From just 11 products when it started in 1997, Amway Phils. now has more than 400 and has a complete line of health and dietary supplements and whole food concentrates. It also has skin care, makeup, hair and oral care lines as well as home care formulas, organic nutritional supplements and even organic fertilizers.

The company is introducing two new Nutrilite supplements.

Acerola C is a vitamin supplement from natural ingredients and is designed to combat radicals, highly reactive compounds caused by pollution, smoking, alcohol and stress that can destroy a person's health.

Acerola C combines vitamins and minerals with exclusive Nutrilite concentrate formulas to provide a balanced blend of essential nutrients, antioxidants and phytochemicals.

Regular intake of Vitamin C supplement helps people meet the recommended amount of Vitamin C, a vital nutrient for the proper functioning of the body, every day. The recommended daily allowance (RDA) in the Philippines for Vitamin C is 70 mg. Acerola C has 100 mg of Vitamin C.

Vitamin C acts as an environmental antioxidant, essential for the formation of connective tissues, bones and teeth. It also aids in the absorption of inorganic iron and in the treatment of anemia and stress.

Acerola cherry, the main ingredient in Nutrilite Acerola C, has the highest level of natural Vitamin C content, 25 times higher than oranges on a weight-for-weight basis, when unripe.

Potential users of Nutrilite Acerola C, according to Amway, are those who do not eat vegetables and fruits, especially citrus; those who are taking drugs or medications; those living in areas of high pollution, and those interested in increasing their antioxidant protection.

One bottle of Acerola C with 110 tablets is P540, or P3.50 per tablet.

Another Nutrilite product in the market is the Children's Chewables Multimineral-Multivitamin especially made for kids with ever changing needs.

Health experts are concerned that children are not getting enough of important nutrients [vitamins and minerals] due to poor eating habits, including the consumption of fast and processed food. The chewable vitamins were made to replenish certain nutrients needed by young bodies.

One of Amway's goals is to ensure sufficient supply of nutrients for children's growth and development.

The Nutrilite Children's Chewable Multivitamin/Multimineral tablets are good-tasting, chewable food supplements with 11 vitamins, beta-carotene, and four minerals with phytonutrients from concentrates of acerola cherry, pineapple, guava, cashew and passion fruit.

"With these chewables, children get a comprehensive balance of vitamins, minerals, fiber, antioxidants and beneficial phytochemicals, a balance that is close to delivering some of the important phytochemicals when you eat a diet rich in fresh, whole fruits and vegetables," Olmedo explained.

The two Nutrilite supplements contain no artificial flavors, preservatives, or added colors.

Amway Phils. will launch a total of 22 products in the next two years for women's and men's health, weight management, essential supplements and herbals.

E-mail the author at bbondoc@inquirer.com.ph

Why some people commit suicide

INNER AWARENESS

Jaime T. Licauco

FOUR years ago, Rose (not her real name), a young mother of a lovely two-month-old child, committed suicide by jumping from the top of a building in Makati City.

Both Rose's relatives and her husband, Romy, who was also a corporate person like her, could not find any logical reason why she would end her life. The couple had no serious problems with each other; they did not quarrel prior to the tragic incident; they were economically sufficient; the marriage was a happy one; there was no third party involved; her health was good.

Cases of suicide in the Philippines, especially among the young, are increasing. Some of the known causes are drugs, poverty, severe depression and loneliness, parental quarrels, jealousy, shame or loss of face, terminal illness, insanity.

But in the case of Rose, none of these causes exists.

In Western Europe, where the highest rate of suicide has been reported, poverty is never a reason. No one is really that poor out there. The most common reason is angst, an indefinable feeling of meaninglessness and spiritual emptiness amid material wealth and success. Neither does this apply to Rose.

What happens to the spirits of those who commit suicide? For some time, they remain numb and confused on the other side. They cannot understand why they are still alive when they have already committed suicide.

There was this case of a young man who committed suicide by slashing his wrist with a sharp knife. A clairvoyant saw what he did. His spirit kept on slashing his wrist, although his physical body was already dead. He could not understand why he wouldn't die. He continued to slash his phantom wrist thinking he was still in the flesh.

Such a spirit will remain earthbound until he begins to realize he is already dead and accepts it. And there are dead relatives and spirit guides who come to help such confused souls.

The case of Rose was a big puzzle not only to her husband and to the rest of her relatives because, as pointed out earlier, they could find no justification, no rational explanation why she would choose to end her relatively happy and successful life.

The husband was beginning to blame himself for the suicide of his wife, although he obviously had nothing to do with it.

Negative spirit

When I was asked last week for my opinion about the case of Rose, it immediately occurred to me that the cause of her suicide could be a negative spirit. She must have been possessed by an evil spirit and, while inside her body, made her jump to her death.

For no one in her sane mind would do a thing like that. The very thought of the physical pain the person would experience upon landing on the ground should be enough for any normal person to be discouraged from proceeding with the act.

So, I thought only somebody not in full possession of his or her faculties could commit suicide in that manner. The fact that she just gave birth to a lovely and healthy child a couple of months back added further proof to the theory that she was not mentally stable when she jumped to her death.

So, we decided to consult an entity from the upper fifth dimension, who was being channeled by a lady physician through automatic writing, for an explanation. The answer this highly evolved entity gave was enlightening and very revealing.

"Her suicide was caused by an external force, i.e. by a spirit," said the entity. "There was also a deep desire for Rose to end her life. This is the reason for the attraction of the black spirit in the form of a mental nagging thought to disrupt the flow of goodness in her life.

"Rose was very discontented with the way her life turned out to be, though her physical form did not show it. Past life karmic appearances contributed a lot. Her jumping, her suicide could not have been prevented by her husband."

The spirit of Rose came in at this point and continued the automatic writing. She explained that the negative spirit was controlling her. She could not do anything. She asked one of our companions to pray for her and to tell her husband she was still at a loss for having committed suicide.

Address letters to this column to 308 Prince Plaza I, 106 Legaspi St., Greenbelt, Makati City. Tel. nos.: 8107245 or 8926806 or e-mail jlicauco@edsamail.com.ph. Visit my website at http://j.licauco.tripod.com. Listen to my dzMM radio program every Sunday, 6-8 p.m.

Easing a patient's family's worries

CALLED Intensive Care Unit (ICU) or Critical Care Unit (CCU), patients in this specialized section of a hospital need closer monitoring, and are sometimes in shock or near death. The unit, by providing special care to a patient, also offers physical and emotional relief to family members who are reassured their loved one is in competent hands.

At the St. Luke's Medical Center Pediatric CCU, the ratio is one patient to one nurse.

Dr. Herbert Uy, a *balikbayan* physician, said taking care of sick kids was a big challenge. Although Uy had seen kids to be more resilient than adults against illnesses and able to regain normalcy much more quickly, he stressed the need to have sick children attended to as soon as problems arose.

During the gastroenteritis outbreak, for instance, the most important intervention was to try to restore the level of salt in a patient's body.

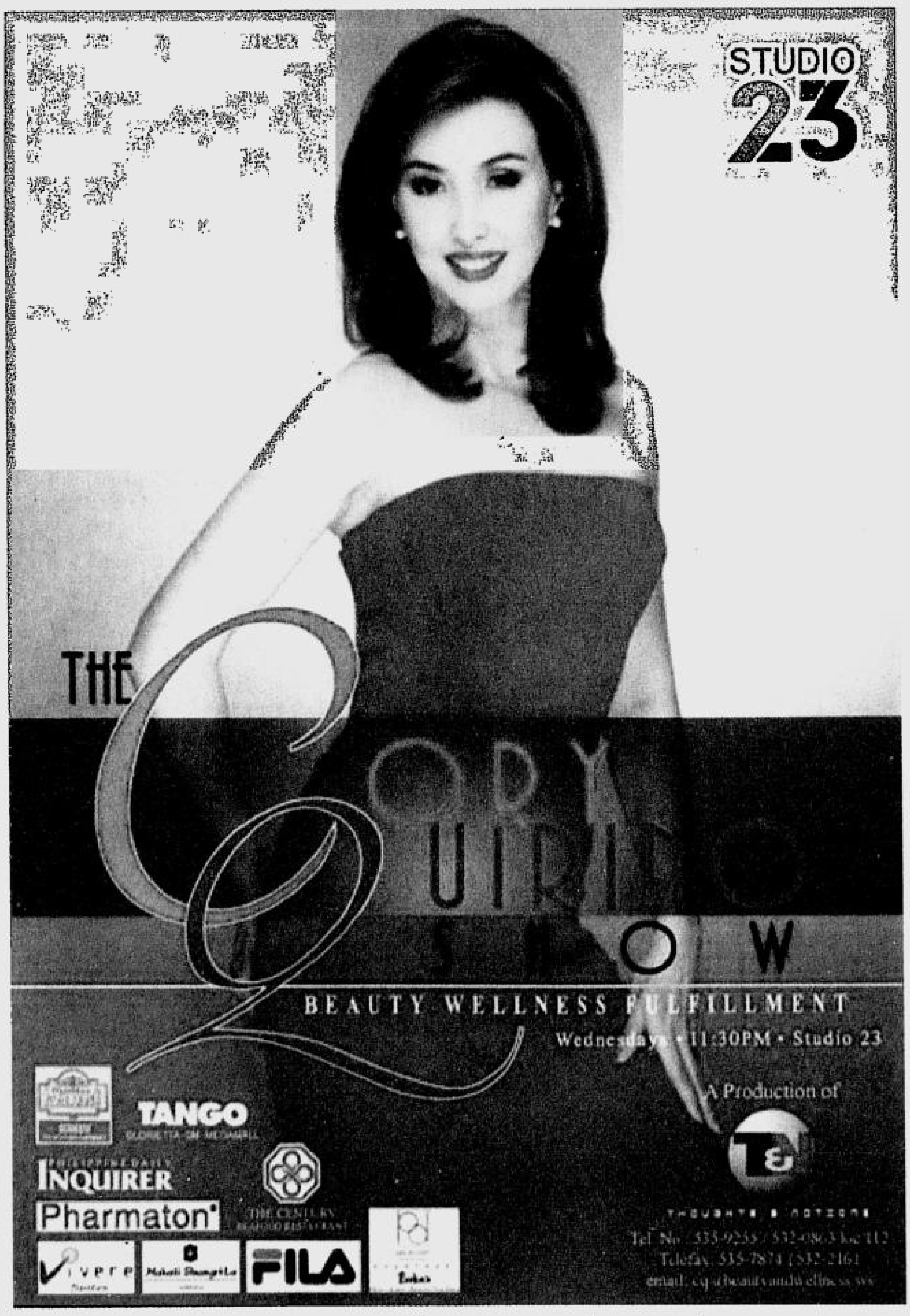
Gastroenteritis kills because of dehydrated or loss of vital body fluids. Once body salts become abnormally low, hydration or intake of replacement fluids should immediately be effected. So when a kid with gastroenteritis is brought to the CCU, the first thing the medical team does is to administer intravenous fluids.

Other cases brought to the Pediatric CCU, aside from those coming from the emergency room or recuperating from surgery, are kids with blood pressure problems, medically referred to as having hemodynamic instability. Kids are also susceptible to low blood pressure or uncontrolled hypertension due to various conditions like kidney problems resulting from scoliosis surgery.

A sharp drop in a child's platelet count, as in the case of dengue patients, will also land him in the CCU.

Dr. Uy urged parents to bring sick kids to the nearest hospital right away once they see the following: any form of bleeding, not eating anymore and vomiting of digested blood. They should not wait for the child to develop shock when they become incoherent, drifts in and out of consciousness, do not recognize family members and are not responsive anymore.

Call 7230101 local 5210.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Treat your health problems the natural way

Some common illnesses may be alleviated through high-nutritional diets and herbal therapies

INSIDE OUT

Cory Quirino

THERE are several ways to treat a health condition. Choices can range from traditional herbal ways to western medicine.

But let's take a look at some common health problems that may be alleviated the natural way through high-nutritional diet and herbal therapies. However, do take note that any information contained here is not meant to substitute for the advice of your doctor.

Anemia

This illness results from an abnormally low number of red blood cells and a reduction in hemoglobin.

Causes. Iron deficiency, ulcers, gastrointestinal bleeding, frequent blood donation, cancer, deficiency of vitamins B6, B12, folic acid and oxygen, excessive use of antibiotics

Foods that can help. Fresh fruits, green leafy vegetables, raisins, liver, soy milk, nuts, eggs, meat, poultry

Bodywork. Shiatsu, yoga

Aromatherapy. Roman chamomile—massage oil

Asthma

Asthma is a syndrome that causes spasms in the bronchial passage, restricting the flow of air.

Causes. Allergies (food, tobacco, dust, pet hair, chemicals, viral infection, physical exertion)

Foods. Fresh fruits and veggies (pineapple, ginger, chili, turmeric, legumes, nuts); juices (lemon, orange, carrot, tomato); fatty fish, sardines

Bodywork. Massage, Alexander technique (to improve posture), tai chi, acupressure

Aromatherapy. Eucalyptus, juniper, wintergreen (dilute in carrier oil and massage on chest)

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

This results from the compression of a nerve as a result of repetitive motions of the fingers and wrist.

Foods. Legumes, soy, fresh fruits, fatty fish, tuna, ginger, cayenne

Bodywork. Acupressure, qui gong, massage

Colds and flu

A viral infection of the upper and lower respiratory tract caused by any of around 200 identified viruses.

Foods. Fresh fruits, asparagus, ginger, chili, low-fat yogurt, garlic, basil; juices (beet, berry, carrot, tomato, spinach)

Bodywork. Acupressure, reflexology, shiatsu

Aromatherapy. Tea tree and peppermint (for facial massage and inhalation), eucalyptus, lavender

Back pain

May result from lifting a heavy object, a sudden motion or a bad fall. Chronic back pain may be caused by viral infection, emotional problems, poor posture, weak muscles, pregnancy and congenital defects.

Foods. Fatty fish (salmon, tuna, mackerel, sardines), fresh fruits and veggies, nuts, extra virgin olive oil, ginger, cayenne

Bodywork. Massage, Alexander technique, shiatsu, reflexology

Aromatherapy. Sage, rosemary, lavender

Bruises

Bruises are caused by trauma to the skin as blood leaks out of the capillary walls under the skin. Apply a cold compress immediately. Add tincture arnica or Hirudoid.

Foods. Fresh fruits, green veggies, legumes, pineapple, juices (beet, carrot, citrus)

Bodywork. Acupuncture

Constipation

This happens when too little fiber and fluids affect the elimination process of the body.

Foods. Whole grains, legumes, fruits and veggies, juices (apple, carrot, prune, pear, tomato)

Bodywork. Regular brisk walking and exercise, massage, reflexology, yoga

Depression

The blues that don't seem to go away may be caused by low-thyroid, hypoglycemia, PMS (pre-menstrual syndrome), allergies (food, chemicals, pesticides), stress, emotional problems and oral contraceptives.

Foods. Whole organic foods, whole-grain cereals and pasta, seafood, fatty fish, nuts, ginger

Aromatherapy. Frankincense, Melissa, chamomile, lavender, orange, ylang-ylang

Bodywork. Massage, shiatsu, reflexology, yoga, regular exercise

Diabetes

A condition where there is too much sugar in the blood and insulin supply is absent or insufficient to control it.

Foods. Whole foods and grains, brown rice, barley, oats, legumes, peanuts, fresh lean meat, eggs, fresh fruits, veggies, cinnamon, cloves, turmeric, bay leaves (stimulate production of insulin)

Aromatherapy. Camphor, juniper, lemon, eucalyptus (massage oil to be applied on the back for relief of pancreas), juniper (mix with olive oil, massage on the spleen area)

Bodywork. Massage, reflexology

Headaches

Dull or sharp pain due to tension/stress, dehydration, anemia or allergies.

Foods. Fresh fruits and vegetables, soybeans, garlic

Heartburn

Acid reflex occurs when hydrochloric acid and pepsin from the stomach seep into the esophagus caused by, among others, eating too fast or too much, eating the wrong food and overeating chocolates and fatty foods, and too much alcohol.

Foods. Fresh fruits/veggies, ginger, garlic, parsley, juices (carrot, celery)

Bodywork. Massage; best to eat three hours before going to bed; lie on the left side to ease symptoms (because the esophagus enters the stomach on the right side); hot water compress applied on the tummy area, and rub with manzanilla oil

Managing your body and all its aches and pains is easier if you'll simply listen. Symptoms that may seem mild to you can be signals that should not be ignored.

Also, oftentimes, what determines the body's ability to heal is a person's state of calm. So, learn to take more deep breaths, have a more positive outlook in life and always affirm, "All is well with me!"

Love and light!

Reference: "The Nutrition Almanac" by Lavon J. Dunne

"Woman, You've Got The Power," a day of fun, fitness and empowerment, will be held on Dec. 6 at Atrium, SM Megamall A. Admission is free. Call 8132612.

Total Wellness Workshop by Nestlé Nutren will be held Dec. 3, 8 a.m.-5 p.m., Nestlé Rockwell Center. Call 8980001 local 6713.

Beauty, Wellness and Fulfillment will be discussed on the Cory Quirino show, Wednesdays, 11:30 p.m., Studio 23 beginning Dec. 3.

"My Hair Stopped Thinning Out & Became Lush Again!"

Eva Abesamis

*"I've always had thick hair but when I was threatened by heavy hair loss a few years ago, I panicked! My friend advised me to go to **Svenson** for their hair-loss treatments. In just a few sessions, my thinning hair had more volume than ever before---I don't have to tease it to make it look fuller. Since then, my hair has remained long and lush that someone even asked me if I was using hair extensions! I said this IS my real hair and only Svenson helped me to keep it thick, full and lush again!"*

Woman AT Svenson

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MON. - FRI. (8 AM - 7 PM) / SATURDAY (8 AM - 3 PM)

When is the best time to exercise?

From page C1

by half the time required to fall asleep.

Scientists believe exercise improves sleep because it produces a rise in body temperature, which is then followed by a drop a few hours later. It is the drop in temperature which apparently makes you sleepy.

The traditional advice has been to exercise at least three to four hours before your bedtime to give your body time to cool down and avoid having a hard time falling asleep.

But now sleep expert Shawn Youngstedt of the University of California of San Diego says vigorous exercise half an hour before bedtime does not always affect sleep.

This is good news because people often ask me if they can exercise late at night or if they can exercise when they come home from night-shift work early in the morning and go to bed afterwards.

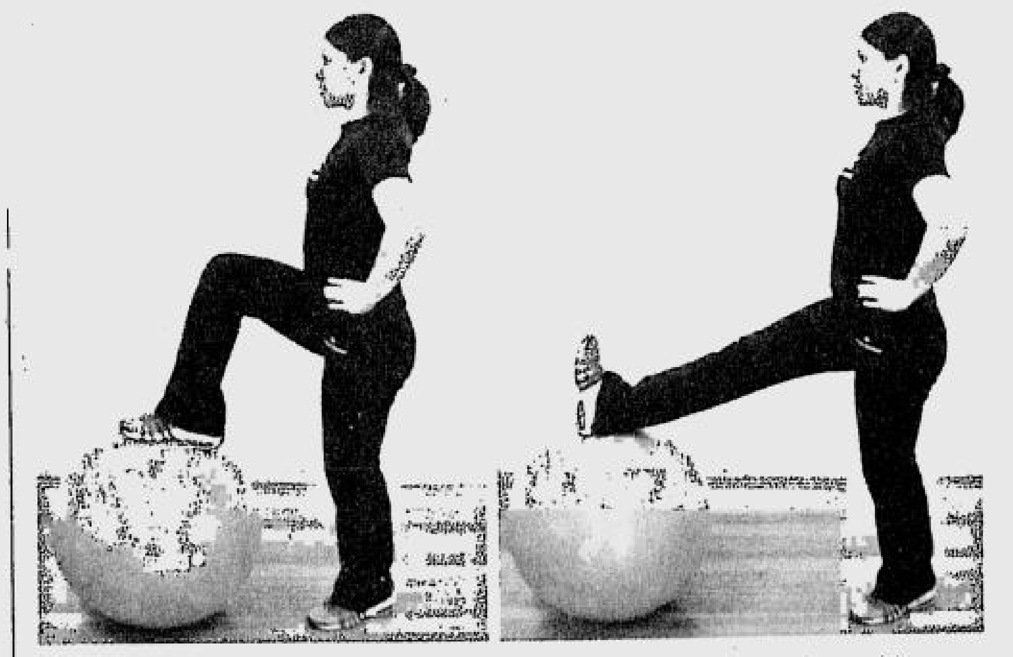
My advice has always been to experiment and find your own personal gap between exercise and bedtime, because I do know a number of people who can exercise and go right to bed, but I also know people who are so sensitive they can't sleep if they exercise after 5 p.m.

Youngstedt, also known as the "sleep guru," told Prevention magazine that people should try doing some nighttime exercise for several weeks and observe how they respond.

Visit www.tinajuanfitness.info or e-mail fitness@altglobal.net

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

Standing leg extension on stability ball



THIS exercise develops balance, strength in supporting leg and core stability in the trunk.

Equipment:

Stability ball. As a substitute, you can use an office chair with wheels.

Exercise technique:

1. Put your right foot on the ball. Place your hands on your hips and bend your supporting knee slightly.
2. Extend your right leg and roll the ball forward.
3. Slowly return to starting position.
4. Do the desired number of repetitions, then switch to the other leg.

Performance tips:

1. If you are new to balance exercises, you can hold a desk or wall for more support.
2. The harder you press into the ball with your foot, the more unstable it becomes, so press lightly.

Repetitions:

Do 5-10 slow repetitions on each leg.

Take Charge Doc!

Nicky S. Montoya, M.D.

MEDICard

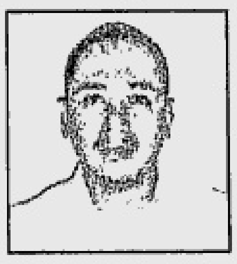
Looking to learn more about your benefits under your MEDICard coverage? Do you want to be clear on the procedures, which allow you to avail of MEDICard's services? Get your information straight from MEDICard's Medical Director, DR. NICKY S. MONTOYA.

FAQs (frequently asked questions)

Do all laboratory exams and diagnostic procedures require prior approval from your Head Office?

No, not all diagnostic procedures and laboratory tests require prior approval from our office. In general, exams below a certain pegged amount may be administered without approval from MEDICard. For those that do require approval, immediate response can be guaranteed from our call center through its hotline number specifically dedicated for our medical provider network.

Meet your MEDICard Team



After his specialization training in Internal Medicine at the National Kidney and Transplant Institute, **Dr. Felix Domingo Jr.** chose to subspecialize in Gastroenterology at East Avenue Medical Center. Dr. Domingo has been with MEDICard for more than three years now. He is married to businesswoman Gigi Domingo and has been blessed with three wonderful kids--Paolo, Anton and Miguel. Doc Felix has special interest in SCUBA diving and is also a lover of tennis. Members may visit him for consultations at the Medical City Clinic-Antipolo, 6 Circumferential Rd., Antipolo City. Clinic hours are from 9 to 11 AM, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Dr. Cynthia Peralta-Lubaton's 14 of more than 23 years of clinical experience was also dedicated to the service of MEDICard members. Now based in the Family Care Hospital at Macaria Avenue, Pacita Complex in San Pedro, Laguna, she continues to bring quality healthcare to the HMO's growing membership. Doc Cynthia finished Medicine at the University of Santo Tomas and specializes in Internal Medicine. She also subspecializes in Diabetology. For your consultation needs, visit her clinic at the Family Care Hospital, Mondays to Fridays from 10 AM to 5 in the afternoon.

Down south, MEDICard members with ailments in their ears, nose and throat may seek the expertise of **Dr. Ramon Gonzales**. Dr. Gonzales, who has been with the HMO since 1998, specializes in ENT-Head and Neck Surgery. He finished his residency for the latter at UP-PGH and later took subspecialization in Cranio-Facial Surgery at the Chang Gung Memorial Hospital in Taipei. Dr. Gonzales is a Fellow to the Philippine College of Surgeons and the Philippine Society of ENT-HNS. For consultations, visit his clinic at the Demontaño Specialty and Diagnostic Center, Inc. from Mondays to Saturdays, 9 AM to 12 noon and again from 2 to 5 in the afternoon.

We encourage all MEDICard members to voice out their concerns and issues at hand. BE HEARD AND BE READ. You can write DR. NICKY S. MONTOYA at 9/F Sagittarius Bldg. H.V. De la Costa St., Salcedo Village, Makati City or e-mail him at inquiry@medicardphils.com. For feedback on availment of our services, e-mail us at feedback@medicardphils.com.

For inquiries on individual or family membership, dial 818-2161. For group or corporate membership, dial 812-8360, 817-5136 or 817-4985 and look for a membership consultant. For Cebu Sales Office call (032) 253-5031; For Davao Sales Office call (082) 224-6931/305-3386.

TEXT MEDICard for your queries: 0917-7518365 (Globe) or 0919-2476240 (Smart). Please don't forget to include your complete name and landline number where MEDICard could reach you. Log on to www.medicardphils.com.

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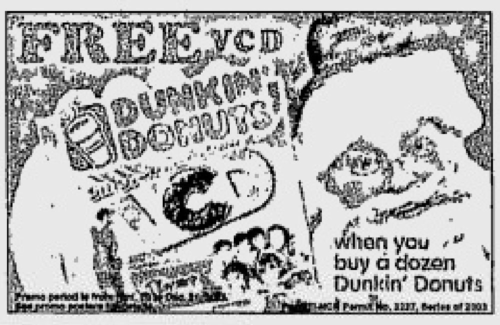
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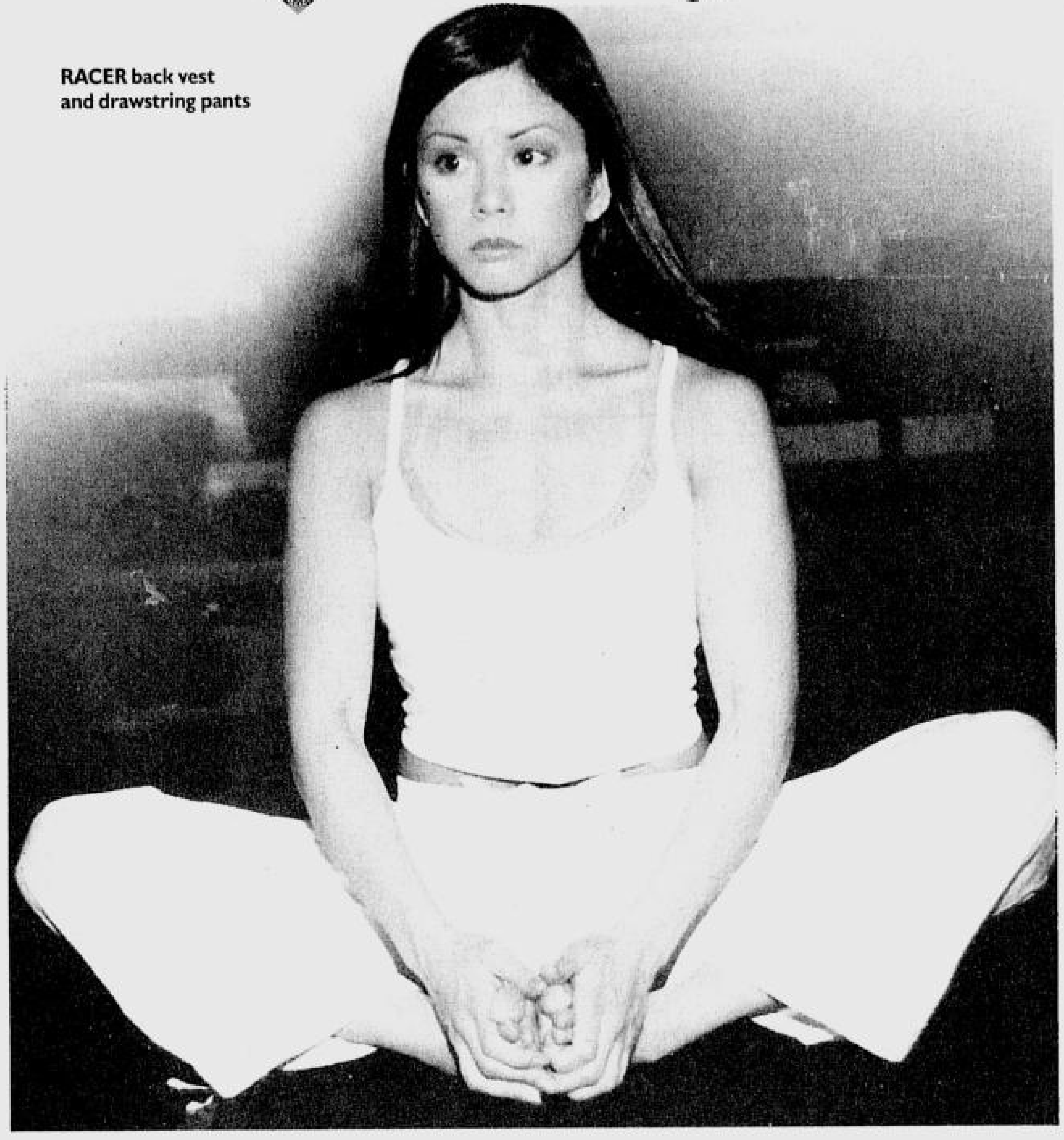
RACER back vest and drawstring pants

PANELLED tee and striped track pants

Yoga wear that feels like heaven

MARKS and Spencer heeds two of the country's leading yogs and their respective views from the yoga mats.

RX 93.1 disk jockey and health and fitness buff Chinggay Andrada is in tune with her mind, body and soul. Yoga is Andrada's breath of relief after a physically rigorous week. "I currently teach punching aerobics five times a week, not to mention my work in the radio station. Yoga helps me relax after teaching, DJ work and hosting," she says.

Aside from helping her balance these rigorous jobs, Andrada reveals that yoga has helped her become more physically flexible and emotionally sound.

Just as relaxed is Rosan Cruz, a 9-5 head executive at a telecom company. From telephone calls, Cruz switches to the peaceful swings of her "Astanga" yoga positions. That may explain her gracefully toned silhouette, but she believes there's more to yoga.

"What I've realized is yoga is more spiritual in nature. The physical benefit derived from regular practice is just icing on the cake. Yoga has enabled me to quiet my mind and lead a stress-free life," Cruz says.

One can sense the inner glow in both women, brought about by a totally calm well-being.

Another reason to make Andrada and Cruz smile is the new Marks and Spencer's yoga and fitness line, View From—a new line of yoga wear that feels like heaven above any yoga mat.

"I love the feel of it and I greatly appreciate how it moves with my body. It allows my skin to breathe and the styles fit my body so well," says Andrada.

"The Dri-Fit line is ideal since in Astanga we do sweat a lot as perspiration is regarded as a cleansing process to rid the body of toxins. The Dri-Fit dries fast, and it gives a comfortable feeling especially at the end of every session, during Savasama (corpse pose), when we lie still on our mats. Before I would end up feeling cold and sticky with sweat," Cruz says.

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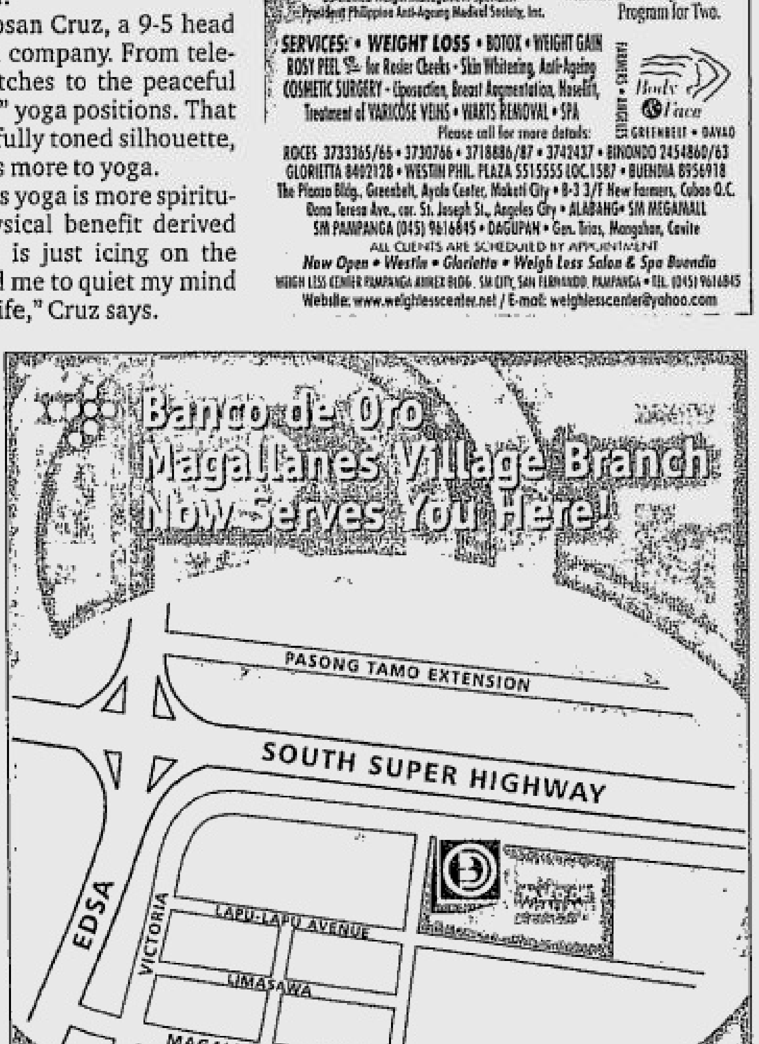

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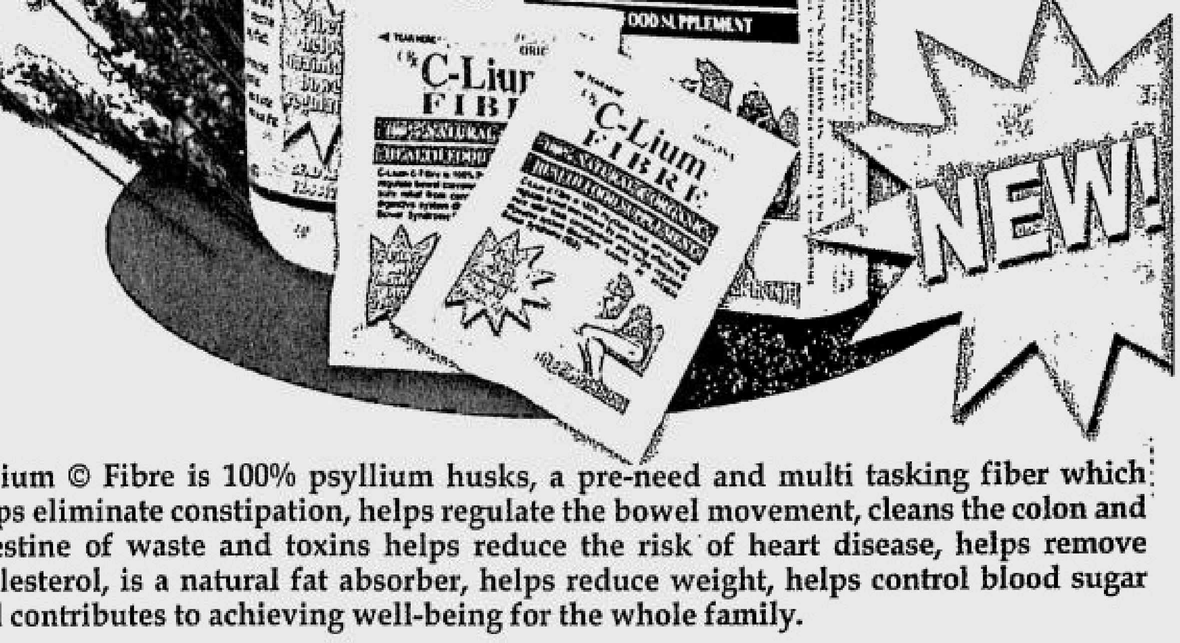

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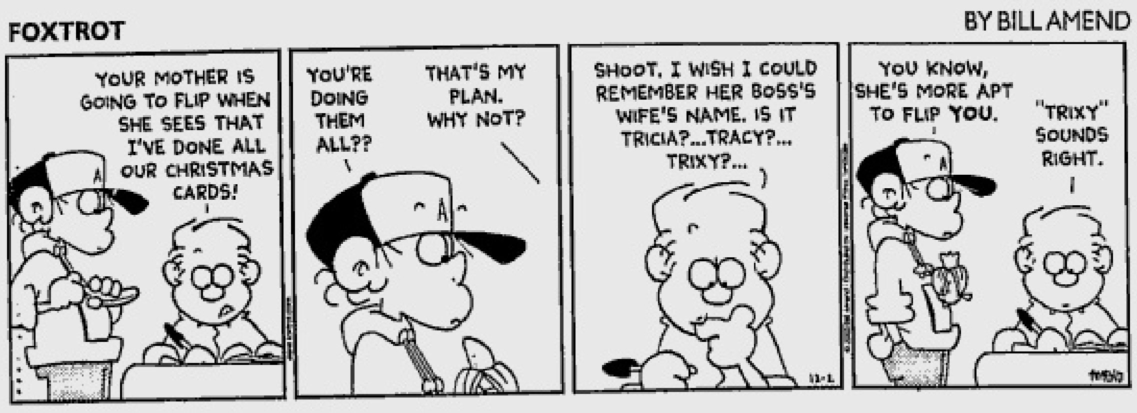
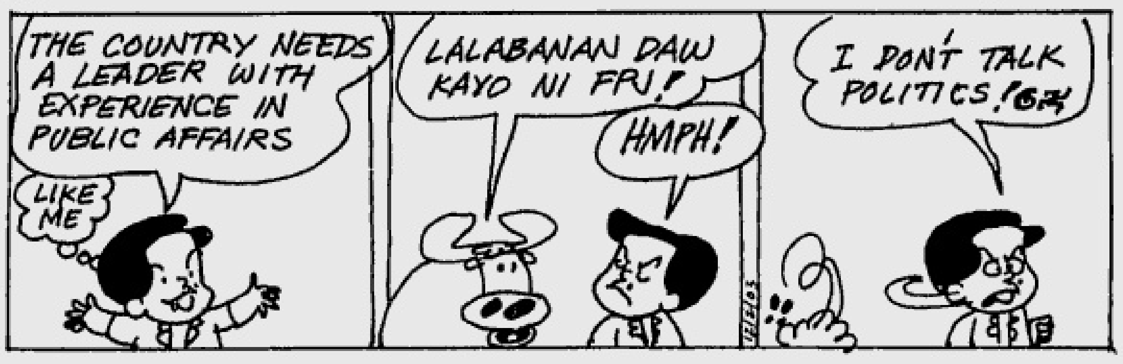
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


YOUR MOTHER IS GOING TO FLIP WHEN SHE SEES THAT I'VE DONE ALL OUR CHRISTMAS CARDS!
YOU'RE DOING THEM ALL??
THAT'S MY PLAN. WHY NOT?
SHOOT. I WISH I COULD REMEMBER HER BOSS'S WIFE'S NAME. IS IT TRICIA?...TRACY?... TRIXY?...
YOU KNOW, SHE'S MORE APT TO FLIP YOU.
"TRIXY" SOUNDS RIGHT.

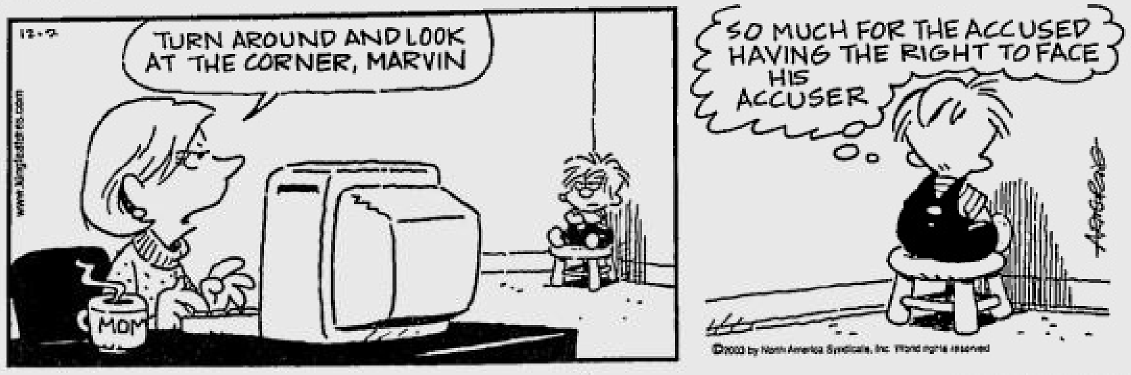
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


THE COUNTRY NEEDS A LEADER WITH EXPERIENCE IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS
LIKE ME
LALABANAN DAW KAYO NI FPJ!
HMPH!
I DON'T TALK POLITICS!

MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


TURN AROUND AND LOOK AT THE CORNER, MARVIN
MOM
SO MUCH FOR THE ACCUSED HAVING THE RIGHT TO FACE HIS ACCUSER
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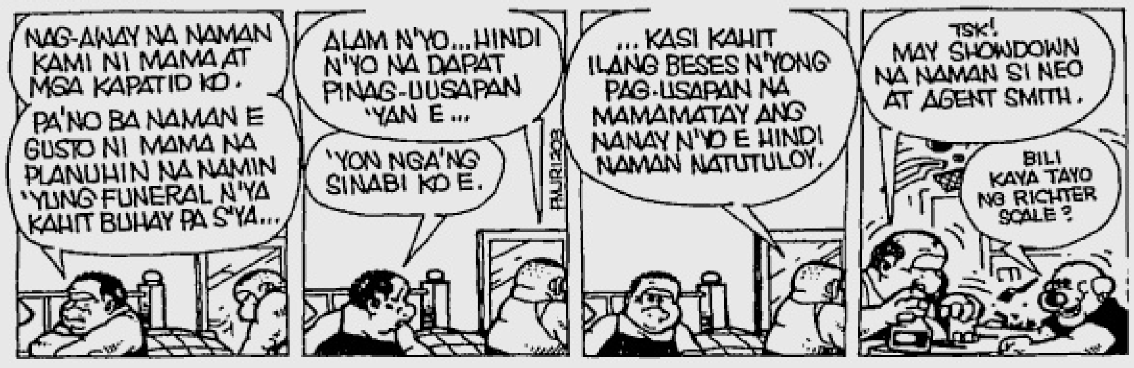
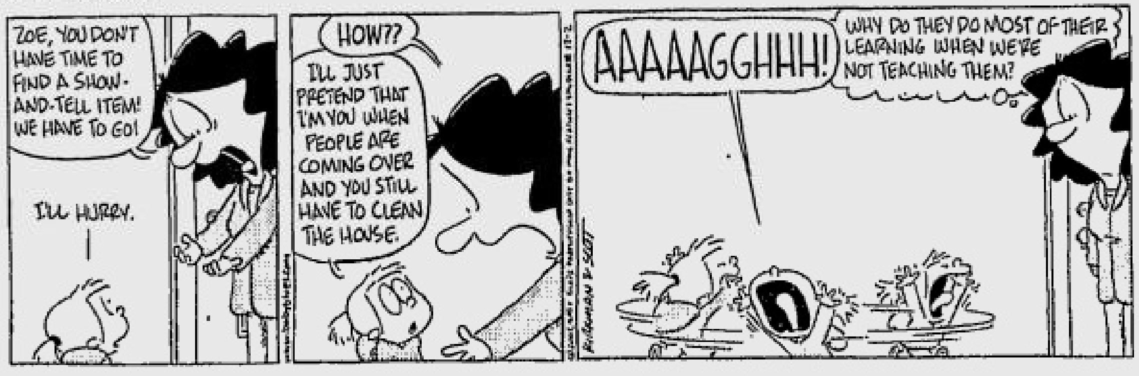
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


NAG-AWAY NA NAMAN KAMI NI MAMA AT MGA KAPATID KO.
PA'NO BA NAMAN E GUSTO NI MAMA NA PLANUHIN NA NAMIN 'YUNG FUNERAL N'YA KAHIT BUHAY PA S'YA...
ALAM N'YO...HINDI N'YO NA DAPAT PINAG-UUSAPAN 'YAN E...
'YON NGA'NG SINABI KO E.
... KASI KAHIT ILANG BESES N'YONG PAG-USAPAN NA MAMAMATAY ANG NANAY N'YO E HINDI NAMAN NATUTULOY.
TSK! MAY SHOWDOWN NA NAMAN SI NEO AT AGENT SMITH.
BILI KAYA TAYO NG RICHTER SCALE?

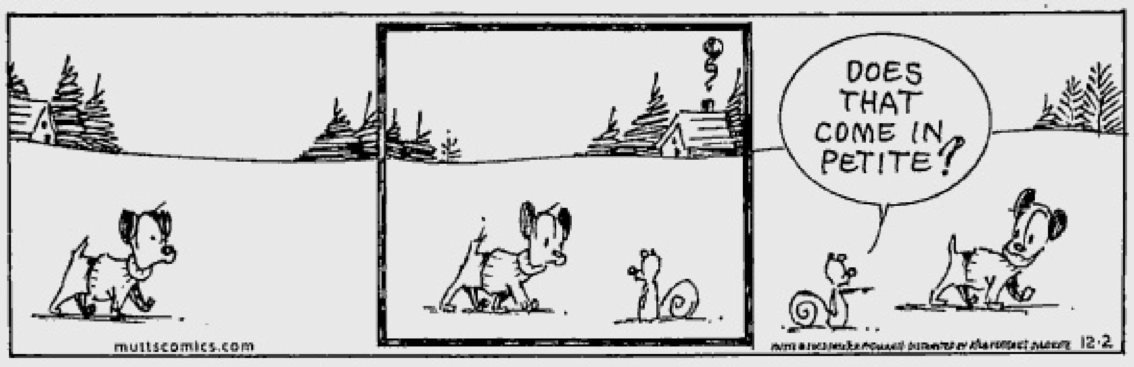
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


ZOE, YOU DON'T HAVE TIME TO FIND A SHOW-AND-TELL ITEM! WE HAVE TO GO!
I'LL HURRY.
HOW??
I'LL JUST PRETEND THAT I'M YOU WHEN PEOPLE ARE COMING OVER AND YOU STILL HAVE TO CLEAN THE HOUSE.
AAAAAGGHHH!
WHY DO THEY DO MOST OF THEIR LEARNING WHEN WE'RE NOT TEACHING THEM?

MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


DOES THAT COME IN PETITE?
muttscomics.com
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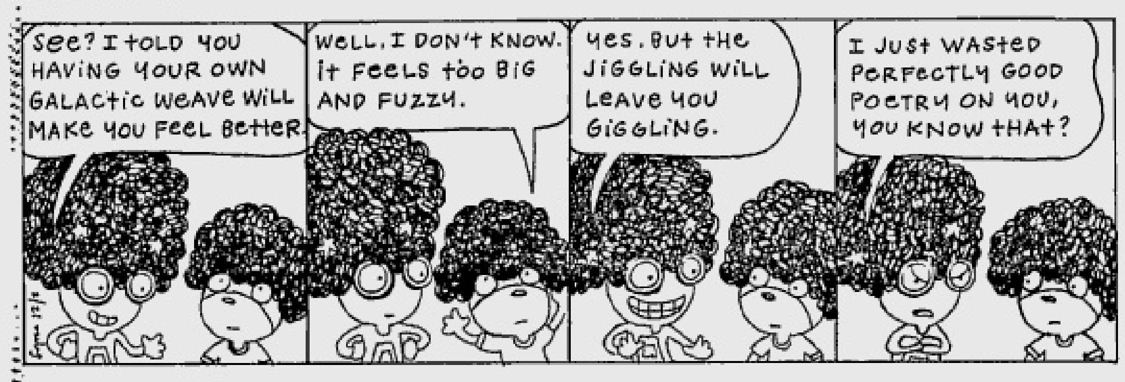
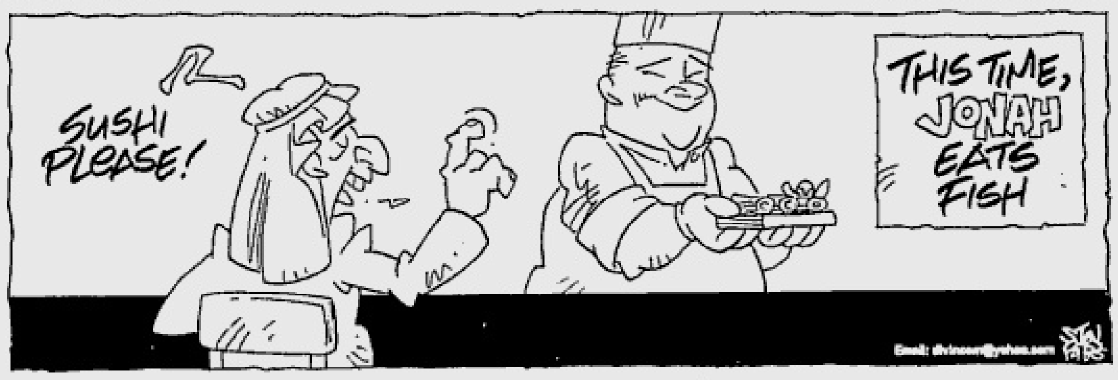
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


SEE? I TOLD YOU HAVING YOUR OWN GALACTIC WEAVE WILL MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER.
WELL, I DON'T KNOW. IT FEELS TOO BIG AND FUZZY.
YES, BUT THE JIGGLING WILL LEAVE YOU GIGGLING.
I JUST WASTED PERFECTLY GOOD POETRY ON YOU, YOU KNOW THAT?

DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


SUSHI PLEASE!
THIS TIME, JONAH EATS FISH

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You are powerful, dramatic and dynamic. Your presence is so strong that you always influence your surroundings. You are passionate about everything. You love the challenge of life, but you always seek victory. Honesty is important to you. Your closest partnerships and friendships become unusually important this year—a major focus.

Birthdate of: Lucy Liu, actress; Britney Spears, singer; Nelly Furtado, singer/songwriter.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You are so confident about your point of view (religious, or philosophical) that you might find yourself out on a limb. Quit trying to prove things to others.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You feel romantically drawn to someone today. (This might surprise you.) What you're really looking for is passionate adventure—be it romance, escape or just some thrills.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): You're inclined to be too generous with family members today. Similarly, you might go overboard buying something for your home. Of course, moderation is the key to everything.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Others find your enthusiasm at work contagious today. Whatever you do and wherever you go, you spread joy. This is wonderful!

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Resist the urge to spend too much money on fun and social activities today. You might also spend a lot of money on children or romantic interests. You like to do things in a big, bold, dramatic way.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): You have the energy to patch up arguments or discord within the family. Generosity comes easily to you now. You want to do things in a big way. (Because of this, you will spend more money than you should. Caution.)

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You're more tuned-in to your spiritual realm than you usually are. Nevertheless, try to operate with some restraint. It's easy to go overboard today in practically everything.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Friends might cost you money today, but you don't mind. You feel generous, carefree and openhanded. Nevertheless, it's good to save for the proverbial rainy day.

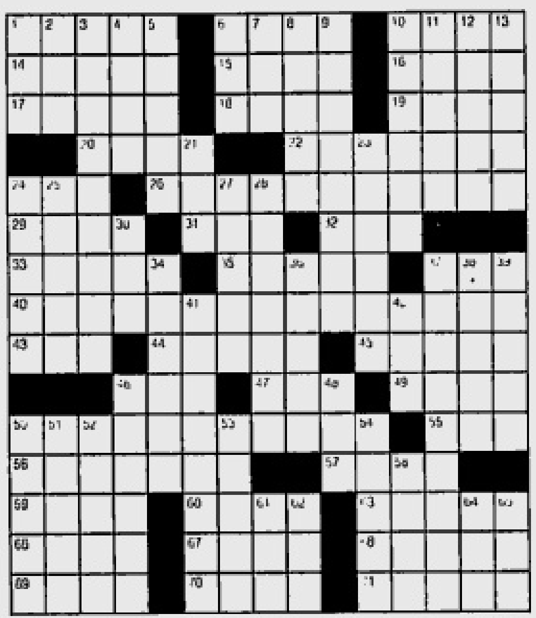
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You feel energized and positive today! You will get ahead in almost anything you desire.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): In some way, you might deepen your faith today. Secret plans for future travel excite you now. You feel like the world is your oyster.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Feelings of mutual generosity exist today between you and others. This is wonderful. You might collect gifts and goodies, and you will share your wealth as well.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You can handle anything that arises between yourself and others today. That's because you're ready to look for common ground upon which to base mutual cooperation. In other words, a win-win solution!

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Stanley B. Whitten
Highwood, IL

12/2/03

ACROSS
1 Chips in chips
6 Grinder or hoagy
10 Crushing blow
14 Winning position
15 Norwegian saint
16 Model Macpherson
17 Popeye's nemesis
18 Neap or ebb
19 Mournful cry
20 Elegant
22 Put in order
24 Noah's vessel
26 Presiding officer
29 Small brook
31 Leb. neighbor
32 Marksman
33 Egg-shaped
35 Body trunk
37 Employ
40 Risky way to fly by?
43 Terminate
44 Palmer of the links
45 Christmases
46 Law enforcement support grp.
47 Austral. state
49 Leafy veggie
50 Police informer
55 Gender
56 Panama Canal engineer
57 Apiece
59 A single time
60 Man or Dogs
63 Cloud nine
66 Russian ruler
67 Requirement
68 Sty sounds
69 That woman's
70 Performer's engagements
71 Hobgoblin

DOWN
1 Eglin or Lackland, e.g.
2 Goose egg
3 18-wheeler's contents
4 Book after Neh.
5 Unemotional
6 Torrid
7 Actor Wallach
8 Detection device
9 Interstate bridge
10 Word of warning
11 Alda and King
12 Irish bay
13 Actress Hayes
21 Greek letter
23 Duplicate again
24 Got up
25 Torn apart
27 __ Martin (Bond's car)
28 Pressing
30 Ignited
34 Possible
36 "Touched by an Angel" star
37 Removing bindings
38 Stone marker
39 Cromwell's earldom
41 Opposite of 37D
42 Arctic seabird
46 Baffling problems
48 Sadness
50 Arboreal mammal
51 Uptight
52 Academy Award
53 Japanese immigrant
54 Mr Moneybags
58 Muse of history
61 Support piece
62 Ames and Asner
64 Hit the slopes
65 Compass pt.

Monday's Puzzle Solved

O	P	R	A	H		S	E	W	S		S	W	A	T
R	O	U	S	E		C	R	A	T		T	R	U	E
I	O	N	I	A		A	M	I	E		R	I	G	A
G	R	E	A	T	G	R	A	T	E		I	T	E	M
				H	A	Y	S		L	O	V	E	R	S
G	A	F	F	E	R			R	E	F	E	R		
O	G	L	E	R		W	H	A	R	F		I	T	T
L	E	A	D		R	I	O	T	S		O	G	R	E
F	D	R		M	E	D	E	S		O	T	H	E	R
		E	A	R	L	E			P	U	T	T	E	R
R	A	F	F	I	A		P	L	A	T				
E	R	L	E		P	L	A	I	N	P	L	A	N	E
N	O	A	A		S	A	R	K		L	O	W	E	R
E	M	I	R		E	R	T	E		A	B	A	B	A
W	A	R	D		S	K	I	S		Y	O	Y	O	S

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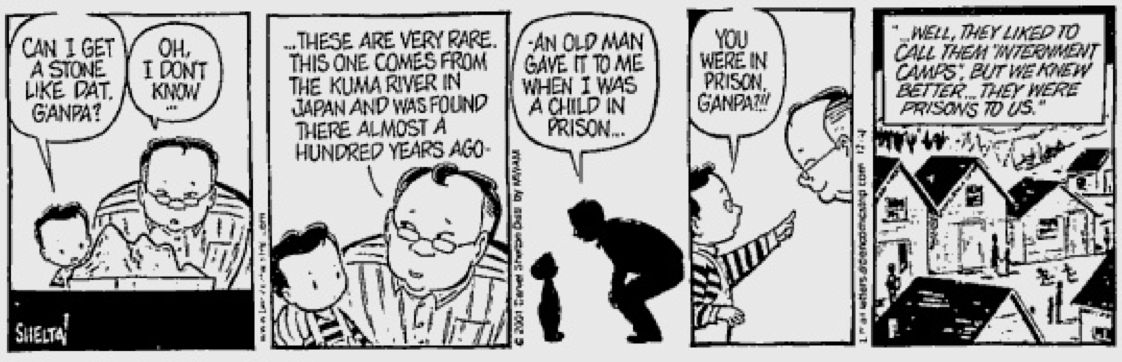
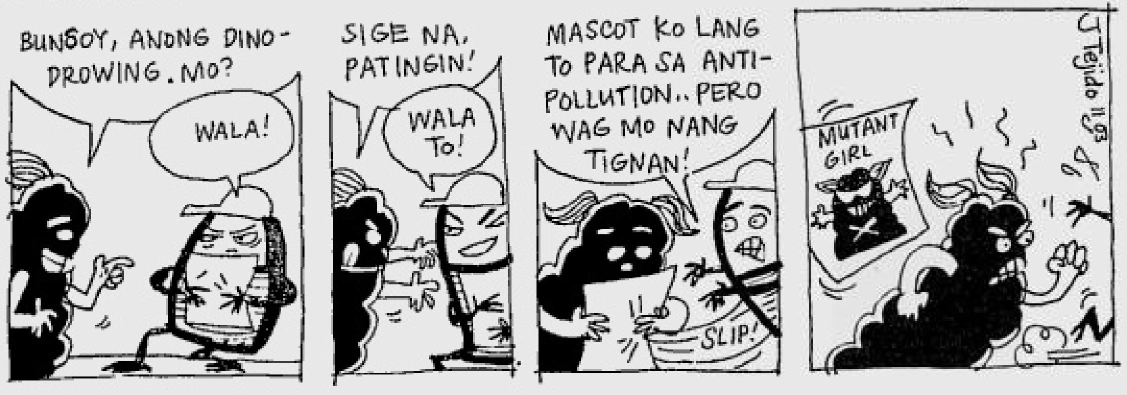
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


CAN I GET A STONE LIKE DAT, GANPA?
OH, I DON'T KNOW ...
...THESE ARE VERY RARE. THIS ONE COMES FROM THE KUMA RIVER IN JAPAN AND WAS FOUND THERE ALMOST A HUNDRED YEARS AGO-
-AN OLD MAN GAVE IT TO ME WHEN I WAS A CHILD IN PRISON...
YOU WERE IN PRISON, GANPA?!!
"...WELL, THEY LIKED TO CALL THEM 'INTERNMENT CAMPS', BUT WE KNEW BETTER... THEY WERE PRISONS TO US."
SHELTA!

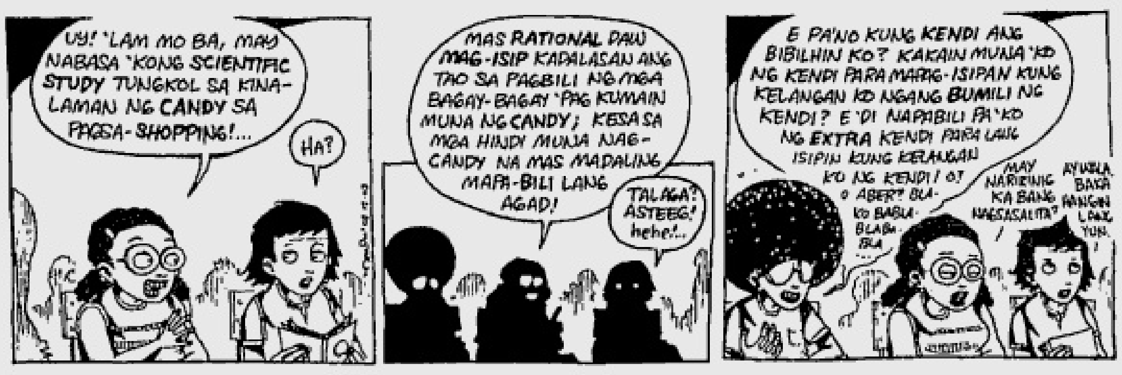
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


BUNSOY, ANONG DINO-DROWING.MO?
WALA!
SIGE NA, PATINGIN!
WALA TO!
MASCOT KO LANG TO PARA SA ANTI-POLLUTION.. PERO WAG MO NANG TIGNAN!
SLIP!
MUTANT GIRL
J Tejido 11/03

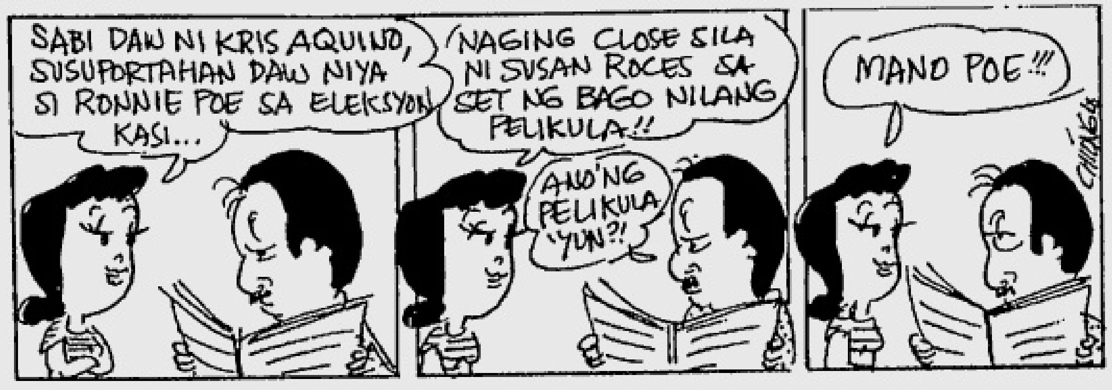
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


UY! 'LAM MO BA, MAY NABASA 'KONG SCIENTIFIC STUDY TUNGKOL SA KINALAMAN NG CANDY SA PAGSA-SHOPPING!...
HA?
MAS RATIONAL DAW MAG-ISIP KADALASAN ANG TAO SA PAGBILI NG MGA BAGAY-BAGAY 'PAG KUMAIN MUNA NG CANDY; KESA SA MGA HINDI MUNA NAG-CANDY NA MAS MADALING MAPA-BILI LANG AGAD!
TALAGA? ASTEEG! hehe!...
E PA'NO KUNG KENDI ANG BIBILHIN KO? KAKAIN MUNA 'KO NG KENDI PARA MAPAG-ISIPAN KUNG KELANGAN KO NGANG BUMILI NG KENDI? E 'DI NAPABILI PA 'KO NG EXTRA KENDI PARA LANG ISIPIN KUNG KELANGAN KO NG KENDI! O? O ABER? BLA-KO BABLA-BLABLA-BLA...
MAY NARINIG KA BANG NAGSASALITA?
AYWAN, BAKA HANGIN LANG YUN.

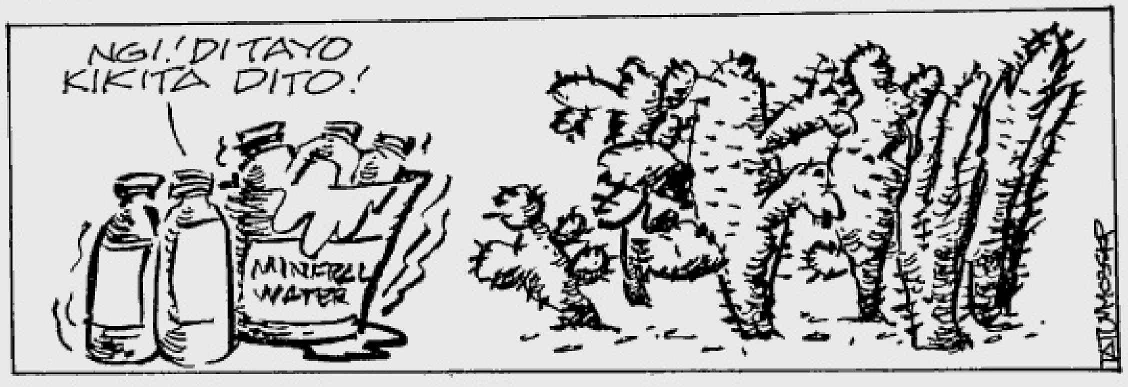
LOVEKNOTS

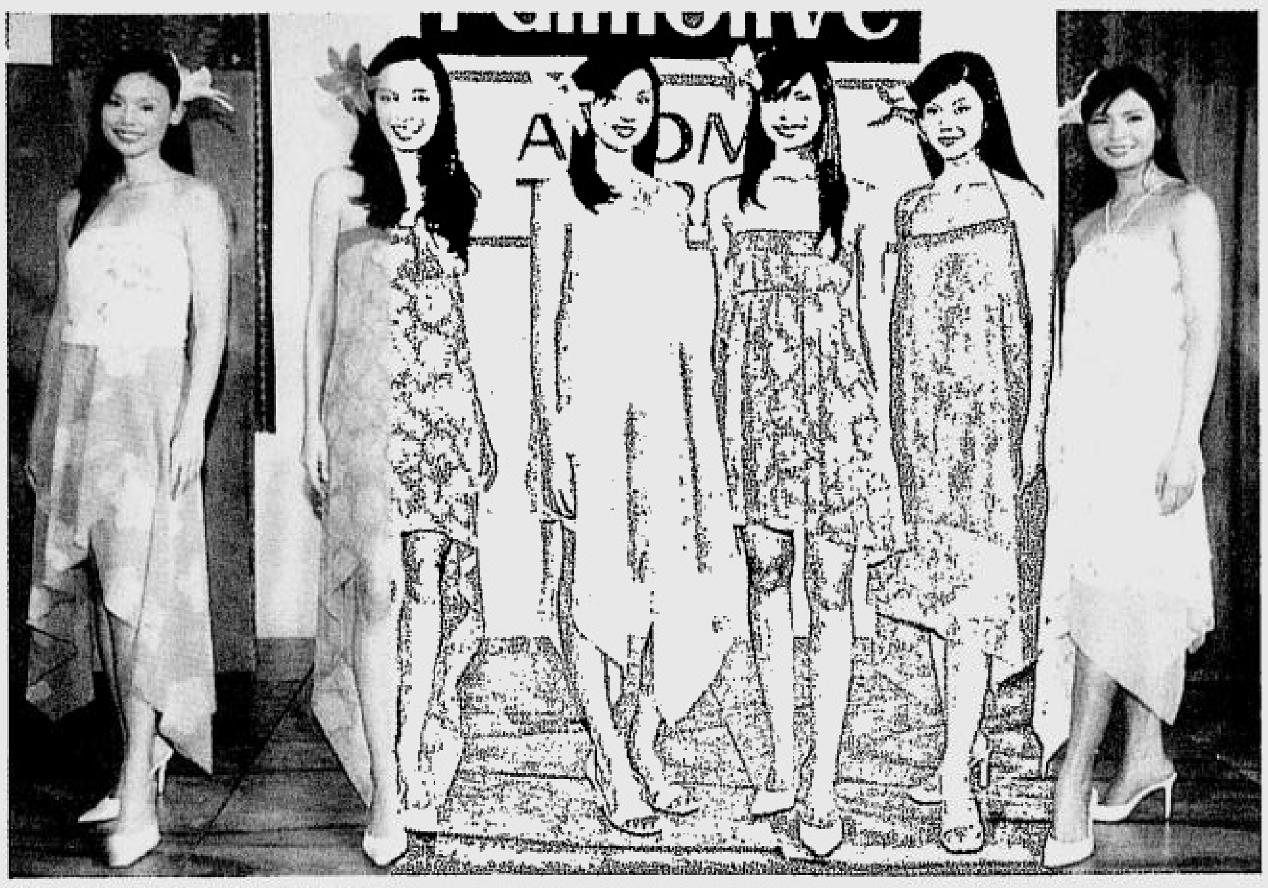
BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


SABI DAW NI KRIS AQUINO, SUSUPORTAHAN DAW NIYA SI RONNIE POE SA ELEKSYON KASI...
NAGING CLOSE SILA NI SUSAN ROCES SA SET NG BAGO NILANG PELIKULA!!
ANO'NG PELIKULA 'YUN?!
MANO POE!!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


NGI! 'DI TAYO KIKITA DITO!
MINERAL WATER
TATUMASSAR


MODELS at the launch of Palmolive Aromatherapy's refreshing scents and colors.

PROGRAM host Hans Montenegro interviews Nymia Raagas, personal care products director, and Jenny Catubig, senior manager for new product development, both of Colgate-Palmolive Phils.

Magic formula for the stressed-out; photographer takes different artistic path

GUESTS get a whiff of the soothing scents of Palmolive Aromatherapy—a blend of lavender, lemongrass, honey, patchouli and *ylang-ylang* to de-stess; and green tea, grapefruits, honey, mandarin and ginger to energize.

YOUNG and handsome Jose Manuel Estrada, marketing director of Colgate-Palmolive Phils.

NYMIA Raagas, personal care products director of Colgate-Palmolive Phils.

TODAY'S hotshots. Luis de Terry, Maggie Go, Elisa Isaac, Kish owner Gary Kish and Dream Bar's Ito Feliciano

CANDID camera! Fanny Serrano with Deo BC

GORGEOUS lookers Amina Aranaz and Romina Urra

EAST meets west. Absinth's top lady Christine San Diego with her man, Van Damme look-alike Morten Bremelhoet

ARTISTS from two worlds. Karen Fabie Concepcion with her mentor, Stella Rojas, and samples of their stunning works of art

PHOTO BY LITA PUYAT

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by **Alex Van Hagen** on **Kodak Max**

HEY, you know what, *palanggas*, I've always believed that one should never be deprived of life's simple pleasures. A trip to the spa for a relaxing aromatherapy session is definitely one pleasure that I enjoy immensely. But, with my hectic schedule, I hardly can find the time to indulge in such a relaxing and revitalizing activity.

So after receiving an invitation to the launch of Palmolive Aromatherapy, I dashed to the elegant Mandarin Oriental Hotel to check it out.

As I breezed into the venue, I couldn't help but be utterly impressed! The place was tastefully transformed into a cool Oriental spa where guests were treated to a scalp and body massage by The Oriental Spa's expert masseuses. Gamelan played soothing sounds of Indonesia to complete the relaxing ambience.

The event was hosted by good-looking television personality **Hans Montenegro** who, despite having to still use a cane after a bad fall while playing badminton that required surgery on his leg, was in a fun mood.

Colgate-Palmolive's bigwigs, like young marketing director, *el guapo* **Jose Mauel Estrada**, personal care products director **Nymia Raagas** and senior product manager for new product development **Jenny Catubig**, were all present and accounted for, dahlings.

After an excellent buffet lunch, the Oriental Spa's Aromatherapy consultant, exotic looker **Doris Prema Sinnathurai**, shared her knowledge on the benefits of aromatherapy.

The fun part came when she asked us to take a whiff of the different essential oils popularly used in aromatherapy. This gave us a chance to experience for ourselves the relaxing or energizing benefits that essential oils offer. Let me tell you this, the oils used in Palmolive Aromatherapy felt absolutely divine.

Beautiful, popular **Bianca Araneta** is the Palmolive Aromatherapy spokesperson. After all, Bianca is ultra-modern, enjoys the things that she does, lives a multi-faceted life and inspires others to do the same!

After that cool experience that afternoon, I indulged in a much-deserved Aromatherapy treatment. Believe *moi*, it was indeed an afternoon of sensory awakening.

Ahhh, my kingdom in exchange for just being able to sit back, chill-out and relax, the Palmolive Aromatherapy way.

TV host-model Bianca Araneta, spokesperson for Palmolive Aromatherapy

From photos to furniture

When you think of or hear the name **Raymund Isaac** what comes to mind? Photographs, semi-nude or nude men or women, and a unique style of photography. But when *moi* heard that Raymund was having a furniture exhibit, I thought, wow, this I gotta see. And see I did, with complete amazement at the versatility of this talented person. I asked him, "How did you get into this?"

"When people heard about my exhibit, the general reaction was: 'Huh? A photographer designing furniture?' Well, to those who wondered what was going on, my answer was, 'Why not?' As I have been doing most of the production design in my shoots, the logical next step would be to translate this creativity into useable, longer lasting products, thus furniture design was a natural progression. Most of the pieces on exhibit have come up in the moments that my mind was working overtime during a shoot.

"The furniture should not really be taken in a purely functional manner, but should be seen as fun, relaxed conversational pieces that will (make people do) a double take as different functions reveal themselves to the users and viewers."

Breezing around that hip-tasteful store simply called Kish! in Glorietta 3 with **Philip Cu-Unjieng**, we both looked at and tried sitting on some of the chairs, which looked kinda hard on the butt but surprisingly were super comfortable, not like in some exhibits *moi* had been to where the furniture was so modern the only time you're really comfortable was when you sat on the floor.

The show had eight furniture pieces and 13 large scale photographs printed on watercolor paper, *palanggas*, softening the photography into something similar to a less mechanical medium like sketching and print-making. All the furniture pieces were inspired by fun pop genre movies like, "Legally Blonde," as well as videos like Madonna's "Like a Prayer." *Naturellement*, there were a couple that were definitely conversation pieces— more like show pieces of art, more than just practical.

As we said our "congrats" and "bye" to the man of the hour, Raymund Isaac called out, "Hey Maurice, I hope you had as much fun here as I had in creating these pieces." We did, *palanggas*.

Of children and horses

Young, talented mother of three daughters and pretty as a picture **Karen Fabie Concepcion** is a 1991 Fine Arts graduate of the University of the Philippines, major in Painting.

After college, Karen got involved in the advertising world, needing, like tons of young anxious new graduate, to secure a stable living. For three years, Karen was fortunate to work as a visualizer and junior art director for Basic/Foote, Cone and Belding, now known as Basic Adverting. Then she got married and started having her blessings.

In 1997, Karen met **Stella Rojas** when she enrolled in the latter's class. "Stella brought me back to a world I was very familiar with, painting. I always took my painting half seriously and never really imagined myself as a serious painter. With every session, Stella reminded me of the fun and fulfillment that painting gave and she also gave me a deeper understanding of myself as an artist because she believed in me and my work." The rest is history.

Her first show at the Ayala Museum in 1997 titled "Cheval" was a sell-out! Now, in her latest exhibit titled, "Two Worlds," Karen Fabie Concepcion will be showing her works on her beloved themes—horses, children and flowers. She is also now trying a new theme, which has attracted her attention: fish.

Karen is an avid equestrienne and actively competes in Show Jumping. Since 1997, she has had three one-woman shows and has joined several group shows as well. Stella Rojas, her mentor, will be showing her favorite subject, Parisian landscapes. She continues to encourage Karen to paint more and more.

The one of a kind exhibit, "Two Worlds," opened Nov. 6 at Le Souffle, The Fort, and is ongoing until Dec. 6.

Check it out, *palanggas*. You'll agree that "Two Worlds" is the meeting of minds of two painters, Karen and Stella, each with her own unique world. They put these worlds together to come up with this show, which is rich with life and experience.

Fragrant as flowers, smooth as silk

By Allison W. Lopez

WHEN it comes to pampering, it's not just the heady scent that counts. It's the whole idea of bathing luxuriously and smelling great from head to toe as you begin the day with an invigorating feeling and end it in a relaxed state of mind.

With this in mind, Colgate-Palmolive has created a new line of shampoo, shower gel and talc powder products called Aromatherapy.

Infused with essential oils to rejuvenate the body inside and out, these products use nature's stimulants to awaken the senses.

Aromatherapy, the ancient art of using natural oils extracted from aromatic plants to enhance one's health and beauty, can now be easily enjoyed with the new beauty line.

"We created these products to give the mass market the chance to enjoy aromatherapy," says Nymia Raagas, marketing director for personal care products.

Beauty products that tout aromatherapy benefits have long been a staple in store shelves, but Colgate-Palmolive's aromatherapy line is specifically geared toward ordinary working women who go for practical, inexpensive solutions to their beauty requirements.

With the Philippine hair care market a whopping $180-million business, it's no wonder that the company decided to introduce its first aromatherapy shampoo line here. The product is also available in sachets.

The shampoo makes a great first impression with a winning fragrance—plus it also doubles as a conditioner.

There are two variants—the citrusy Energy, a blend of green tea, grapefruit and honey; and the soothing Anti-Stress, which has lavender, lemongrass and honey.

Energy shampoo's lemony smell is perfect to start the day with, as it gives limp and dull hair greater body and shine.

The Anti-Stress variant, on the other hand, has a calming scent and a rich formula that restores moisture, softness and shine to dry hair.

Silky feel

The shower gel, which Raagas says was a hit in the UK and will be available in the Philippines for the first time, also comes in the same two variants but with different blends.

Palmolive
AROMA THERAPY
SHAMPOO CONDITIONER
Palmolive
AROMA THERAPY
Shower Gel
ANTI-STRESS
250ml

THE ANTI-STRESS line has the soothing scent of lavender in its shampoo, shower gel and talc powder.

Will ordinary Filipinos leave their soap bars for shower gels? Raagas answers in the affirmative. A market test proved that first-time shower gel users found the silky after-bath feeling appealing.

"Soaps make the skin feel tight. The body wash line is really for moisturization," she says.

Indeed, while one bottle of shower gel may cost around P70, which is three times the price of an ordinary body soap, it can also last for around two to three weeks and remove the need for applying skin lotions after bathing.

Palmolive
Palmolive

ENERGY shower gel and talc powder

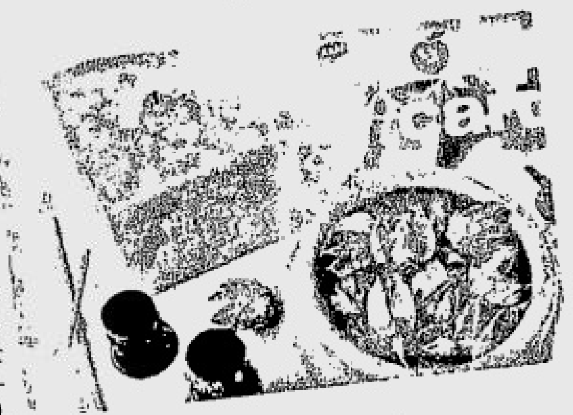
The talc powder, on the other hand, first made its mark in Thailand, where Raagas says the humid weather made the powder a must-have among Thais.

Needless to say, having the same climate as Thailand made the Philippines the natural next destination of the product.

The talc perfectly complements the body wash, as it glides smoothly across the skin and provides a lasting feeling of freshness after every bath.

The Aromatherapy line is the perfect indulgence for the hard-working Filipina. If she finds it hard to choose between the rousing smell of green tea and the relaxing scent of lavender, she can always pamper herself by getting both.

Health store offers stress-free gift cards

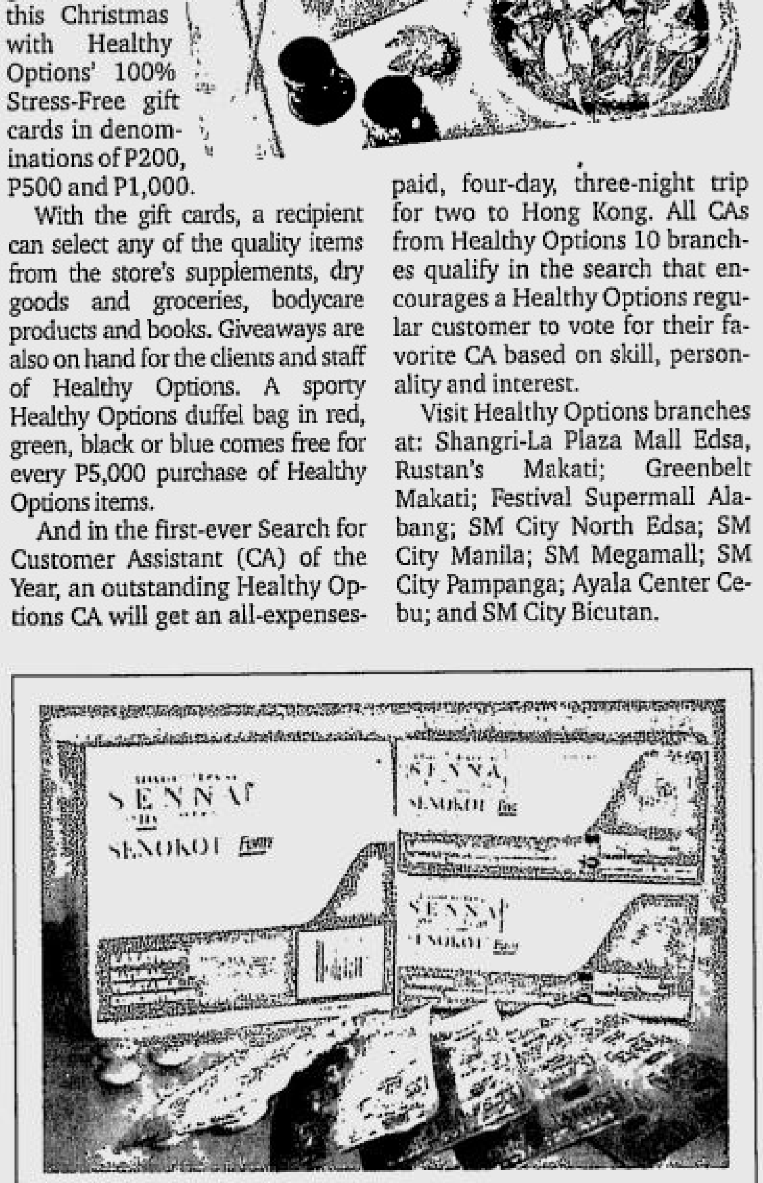


IF living a clean and healthy life is your loved one's resolution this 2004, then help him get a headstart this Christmas with Healthy Options' 100% Stress-Free gift cards in denominations of P200, P500 and P1,000.

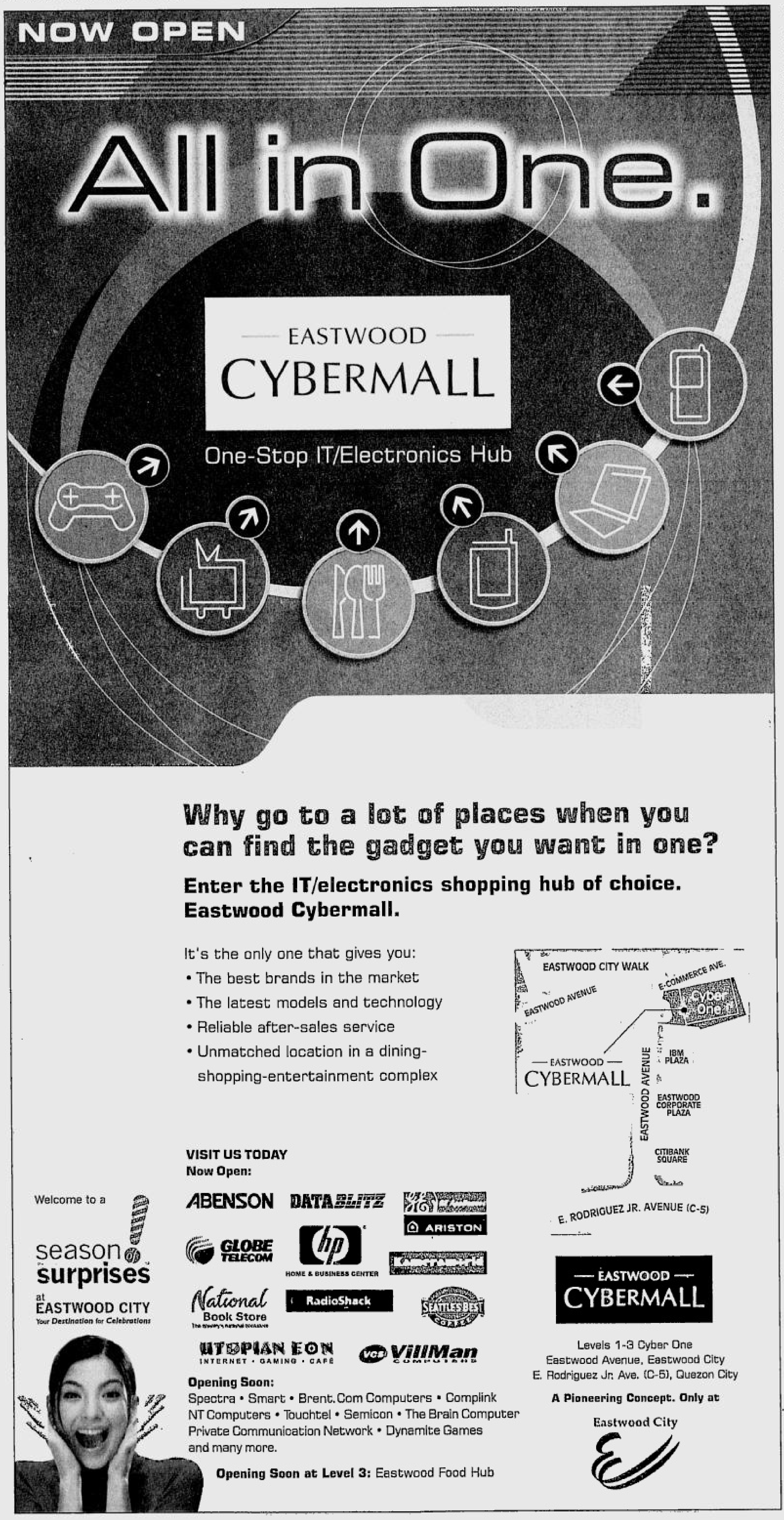
With the gift cards, a recipient can select any of the quality items from the store's supplements, dry goods and groceries, bodycare products and books. Giveaways are also on hand for the clients and staff of Healthy Options. A sporty Healthy Options duffel bag in red, green, black or blue comes free for every P5,000 purchase of Healthy Options items.

And in the first-ever Search for Customer Assistant (CA) of the Year, an outstanding Healthy Options CA will get an all-expenses-paid, four-day, three-night trip for two to Hong Kong. All CAs from Healthy Options 10 branches qualify in the search that encourages a Healthy Options regular customer to vote for their favorite CA based on skill, personality and interest.

Visit Healthy Options branches at: Shangri-La Plaza Mall Edsa, Rustan's Makati; Greenbelt Makati; Festival Supermall Alabang; SM City North Edsa; SM City Manila; SM Megamall; SM City Pampanga; Ayala Center Cebu; and SM City Bicutan.



QUICK RELIEF
People suffering from constipation may find immediate relief with Senokot Forte tablets, a natural laxative to be taken at bedtime. Senokot Forte, a product of Pascual Laboratories Inc. under license of Mundipharma Switzerland, is available in leading drug stores nationwide. It comes in 187 mg tablet and granules with chocolate flavor for children.



EASTWOOD CYBERMALL

Why go to a lot of places when you can find the gadget you want in one?

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- The latest models and technology
- Reliable after-sales service
- Unmatched location in a dining-shopping-entertainment complex

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Opening Soon at Level 3: Eastwood Food Hub

EASTWOOD CYBERMALL

Levels 1-3 Cyber One
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E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave. (C-5), Quezon City

A Pioneering Concept. Only at
Eastwood City

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2003
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

dti
PCs FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SPECIAL REPORT

"With PCPS, ICT education is now becoming a benchmark of public education."
- DTI Sec. Mar Roxas

Q&A on p. E2-3

Roxas: PCPS a catalyst for countryside development

Barangays now in IT mainstream

To enhance the development of the country's human resource capital and maintain competitiveness in the global economy, the government is prioritizing IT education down to the barangay level and strengthening the national information infrastructure.

Lead project for this is the Personal Computers for Public Schools (PCPS) project - the nationwide computerization project initiated by Trade Secretary Mar Roxas as far back as 2001.

In the initial phase of PCPS, DTI focused on providing PCs to more schools in the rural areas, which accounted for some 78% of the 739 recipient schools (out of a total of 996 recipients) who responded to a recent survey. This translates to 188,041 rural high school students out of 282,346 students from the respondent schools who now experience hands-on computer training on basic lessons like word processing, spreadsheets, and computerized presentations.

The presence of the computer labs in the countryside not only triggers the interest of students but also the curiosity of the rest of the community, whose lives are being changed with increasing IT access. Barangay officials and organizations in the host communities get a glimpse of the IT window as they conduct training and development programs in the computer labs. When availability of computers permits, host communities spend an average of 4.4 hours at the computers every week.

JAPANESE AMBASSADOR Kojiro Takano and Trade Secretary Mar Roxas visit Ramon Magsaysay High School in Manila to check the progress of DTI's computers for public schools program. The successful implementation of the program in 1,000 schools nationwide led to Japan's fund approval for its second phase.

PCPS made inroads towards enhancing IT access, and [illegible]ined with previous government computerization efforts of the Department of Education (DepEd) and Department of Science and Technology (DoST), has reduced the computer backlog from 69 to 45%, but there are still 2,342 public high schools without access to computer technologies.

Since the kick-off of PCPS almost two (2) years ago – from the screening of beneficiary schools to the actual roll out of computers – the number of schools interested in the program has surged well beyond DTI's targets.

To boost their chances of qualifying under PCPS, some schools have conducted pledging sessions where different sectors in their community commit to provide the school's much-needed counterpart facilities. This degree of cooperation within the local community, engendered by PCPS, becomes the catalyst of development as these host communities strive to be part of the mainstream of IT development in the

ROXAS/ E2

Essay Winners Bared

Altered lives and bright hopes with IT competency

Her jaw dropped in wonder as the aquarium turned to crawling worms, sending a shiver up the 15-year old senior of San Rafael National High School in Tigaon, Camarines Sur.

Another 15-year old, also a senior from Taft National High School in Eastern Samar, "gawked" at 20 white boxes with blinking lights, the first time he entered the computer lab.

A sophomore from Tupi National High School wonders aloud why "RAM" no longer is a male sheep, a "mouse" not as annoying, a "web" other than the spider's home.

"First encounters" with the PCPS eLabs must have elicited a broad range of reactions from the over 280,000 public high school students who had their first glimpse of computers through PCPS. But the eventual outcome after the awe and wonderment, as borne out by the entries in the just-concluded PCPS Student Essay Writing Contest 2003, is safe passage into cyberspace, and a life and outlook permanently altered by IT.

To Rizalyn C. del Rosario from Tigaon, it is her awakening. " I can 'be at par with my private school counterparts," she wrote. (See full text of her essay on page 4)

In a similar vein, Julius A.D. Cebreros from E. Samar, credits his computer, fondly named "13", for the victory of a barrio boy in the "fierce struggle to prove that technology was for everyone."

The essay contest served as a feedback on the impact of PCPS on the individuals, the schools and the community. Three levels of elimination were held at the provincial, regional

ALTERED/ E3

GMA leads PCPS2 launch in Manila

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo will formally launch today the second phase of the Personal Computers for Public Schools (PCPS 2) project of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) at the Mariano Marcos Memorial High School in Sta Ana, Manila, signalling the deployment of some 11,000 computers to 1,100 schools and 250 local government units (LGUs) nationwide.

Trade Secretary Mar Roxas, who pursued the nationwide computerization project as early as 2001, said the first PCPS component was an unequivocal success but there is still the urgent need to step-up the effort to erase the digital divide and enhance the development of an IT literate citizenry.

According to Secretary Roxas, the PCPS program provides a firm basis for the President's Strong Republic. This, he said, is achieved through human resource development at the grassroots level. Essentially, government is tasked with developing the potentials of the youth as productive and responsible citizens. The DTI, on the other hand, is the lead agency mandated to spearhead the country's IT development.

Through IT-intervention, the DTI aims to help the less-privileged youth secure better jobs in today's competitive work arena.

With the LGU component of PCPS 2 in place, DTI can likewise assist in the modernization of local administrative systems. This much-needed boost will help LGUs handle their workload more efficiently and effectively, practically laying the groundwork towards achieving the vision of a Strong Republic.

The formal launch of the project serves as a stimulus and motivation for public school students and government employees to excel. In effect, PCPS has helped narrow the digital divide – the unequal access to technology between rich and poor, for both individuals and institutions. This technological imbalance can be detrimental to a developing nation's economy, justifying the need for more of such ventures as the PCPS.

Secretary Roxas himself believes that, "the nation is only as strong as its foundation. In these trying times, what we need is a stable and reliable government built on people and principles. The PCPS is a stepping stone in that direction."

Partnership & Cooperation: The "PC" in PCPS' success

PCPS, the flagship eCommerce project of the Department of Trade & Industry (DTI), became possible with infusions of Japanese grant aid.

But it became the success that it is because of the wholehearted support of industry leaders, the beneficiaries had taken the IT bounty to heart, and recipient communities collaborated and pooled their resources to provide the basic facilities for the eLab package.

"They converted vacant classrooms into computer laboratories," Sec. Mar Roxas said. Recipient schools, he explained, were required to provide counterpart facilities like computer tables and chairs, electrical facilities, proper lighting, and monthly funds for electric bills, internet service and supplies.

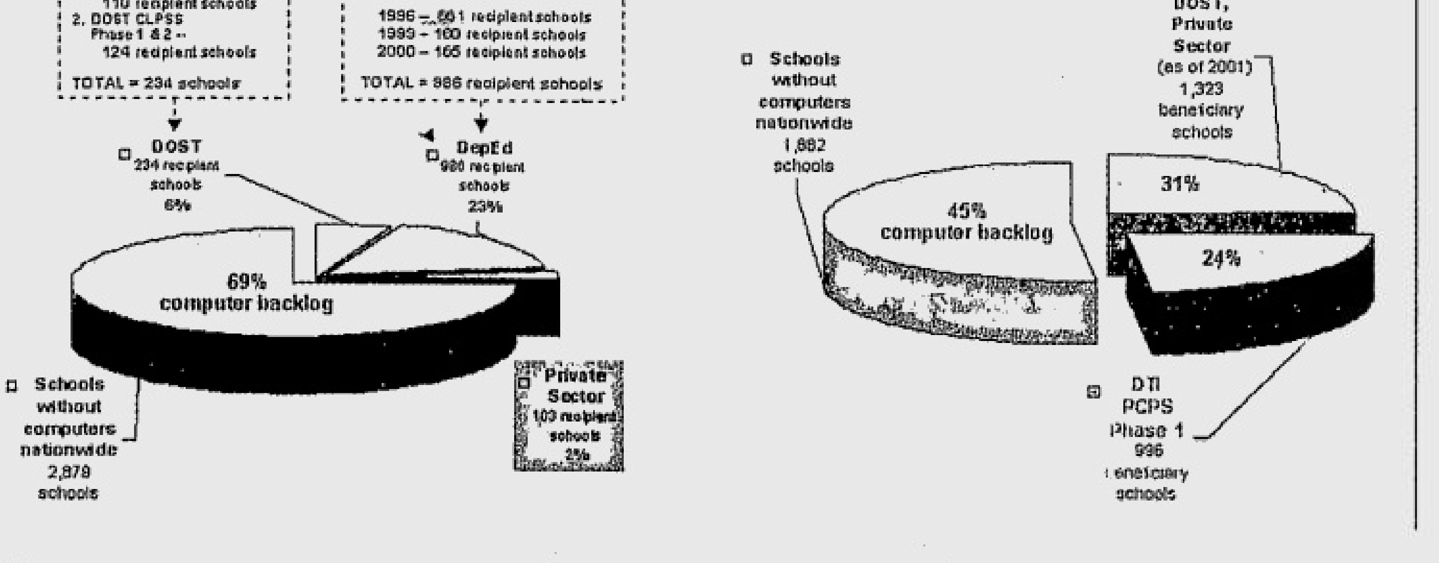
For that counterpart, the school received an eLab computer package of 20 units of PCs, two printers, an external modem and CD-ROM, plus teacher training.

Community Resource Mobilization. "We are very lucky to avail our school with computers from PCPS," Gaudencio C. Riego, officer-in-charge of Baranasan High School in T. Fornier, Aklan, enthuses in his letter to PCPS.

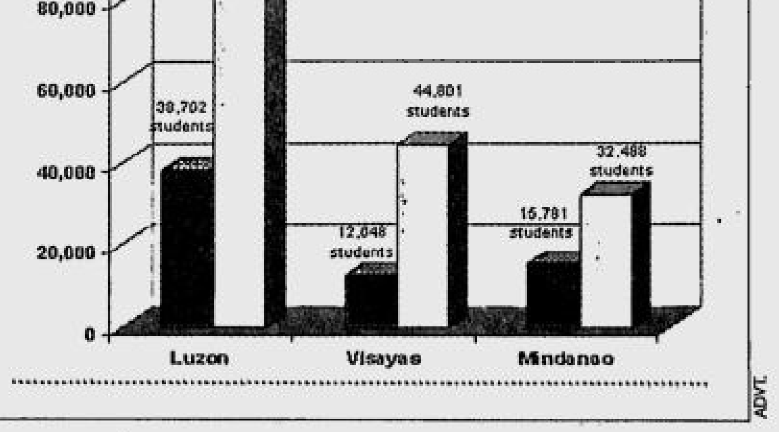
According to Sec. Roxas, the delivery of computers to one barangay would stir neighboring communities into concerted action to put up their counterpart facilities to qualify and press inclusion in PCPS.

PARTNERSHIP/ E2

COMPUTER BACKLOG REDUCTION



NUMBER OF STUDENT PC-USERS
in urban and rural areas



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Roxas: PCPS a catalyst for countryside development

From page E1

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With PCPS, many have been set on their way towards IT competitiveness: teachers, principals and students who have found a place for themselves in DTI's nationwide drive towards preparing the country for the "Knowledge Economy."

Erwin Querit of Ilocos Sur had never touched a computer, until the computer laboratories were installed in their respective schools by PCPS.

"Wala pa akong masyadong alam at kinabahan ako kasi baka yung mga classmates ko na may alam na sa computer ay pagtawanan ako," Erwin recalled of his first encounter with computers. "Natakot din ako na bumagsak sa klase kasi hindi naman ako masyadong magaling. Pero nung tumagal ay nasanay na rin ako. Naging madali at maginhawa ang paggawa ng projects. Para hindi naman kami mahuli sa IT at makasunod sa modern technology ng ibang bansa."

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"The students and the whole community are very thankful for DTI's concern," Gloria Jamisola, principal of San Roque High School said. "With the coming of computers, we increased enrollment by 15%. We have 896 students at present who are direct beneficiaries of this project," she added.

"This will surely enable us to keep our students and teachers aware of the technological changes happening around the global community and equip them with computer skills for them not to be overwhelmed by technology and be able to manage the tremendous changes in their lives," Minda Prado, Principal II of Bislig City National High School in Surigao del Sur said.

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Roxas said, with the full-blown implementation of the computer education curriculum in PCPS, the country can expect the biggest number of computer literate students in the near future.

Never has there been a computerization effort that has instilled a sense of responsibility not only in its proponents but also in the people who directly benefit from it. Akin to a vast jigsaw puzzle, the changes that PCPS brought to the beneficiaries' lives as individuals represent different pieces, with one fitting another, which in the long run will portray only one complete picture: PCPS opening to them the window to experience for themselves how IT can make things happen for them, their community and for everyone.

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Realizing the need to ensure a continuous stream of technical workers and to prepare our future knowledge workers for the Knowledge Economy, Sec. Mar forged a broad-based partnership of public and private institutions and the community, and with the generous support of the Government of Japan, launched an ambitious program to bring public high school access to computer technology from about 27% to almost 75%, by the completion of PCPS Phase 2.

Just as Japan invested in PCPS to bridge the digital divide between developed and developing nations, Sec. Roxas focused on public high schools to close that same divide between those schools, and their private counterparts. In PCPS 2, local government units have also been added to bolster their IT capabilities and readiness.

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Q.Who are involved in PCPS and what are their respective roles in the program?

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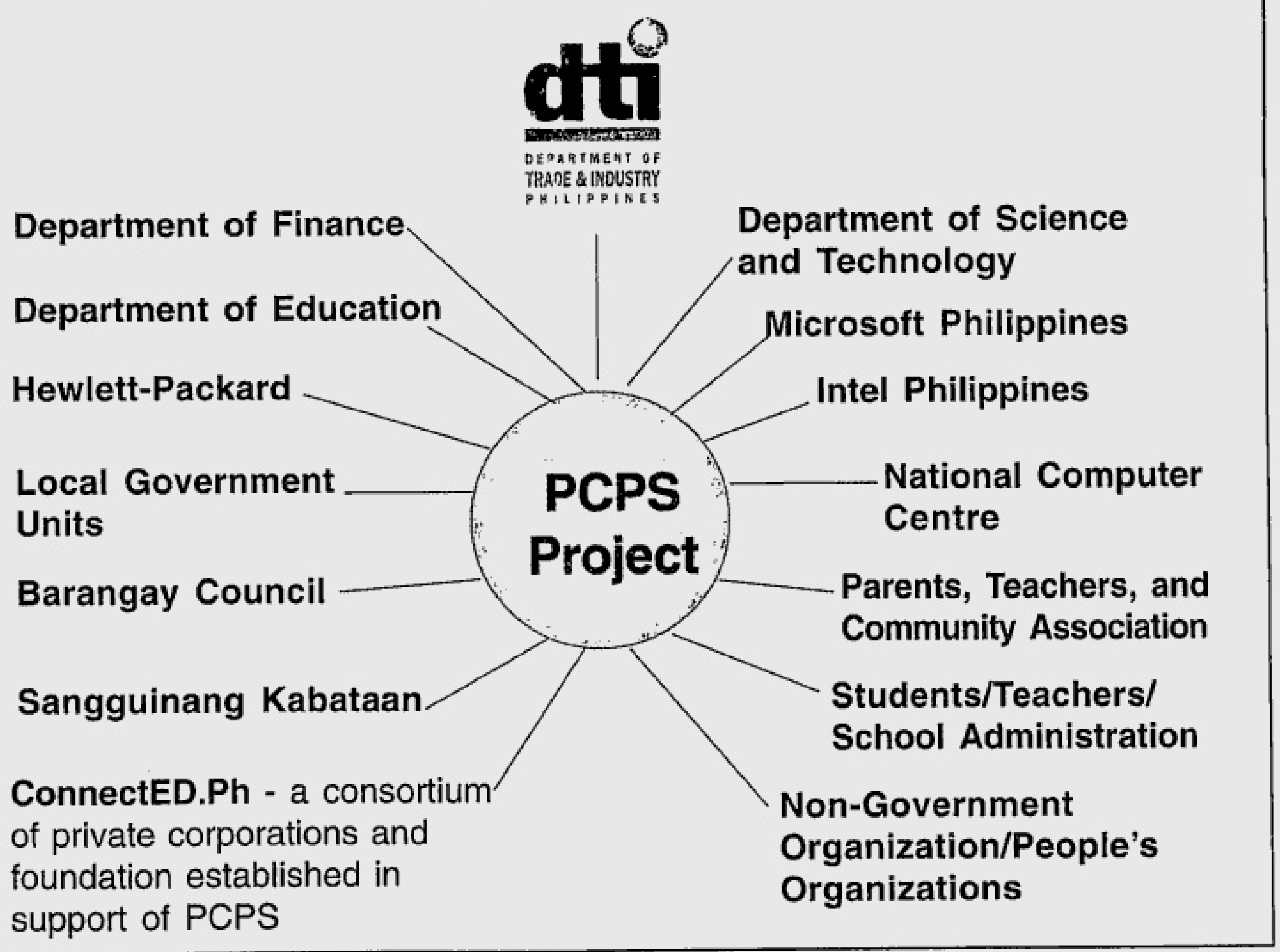
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Clearly, what separates PCPS from other similar projects is the very evident involvement of host communities and various stakeholders.

Counterpart cash donations have reached as much as P 15.8 million and are being used mainly to sustain and defray the cost of maintenance and operating expenses of computer laboratories. Also, a portion of this amount is being used to purchase equipment and basic facilities necessary for the operation of computer laboratories. In addition, some schools have utilized the donated cash to hire security personnel.

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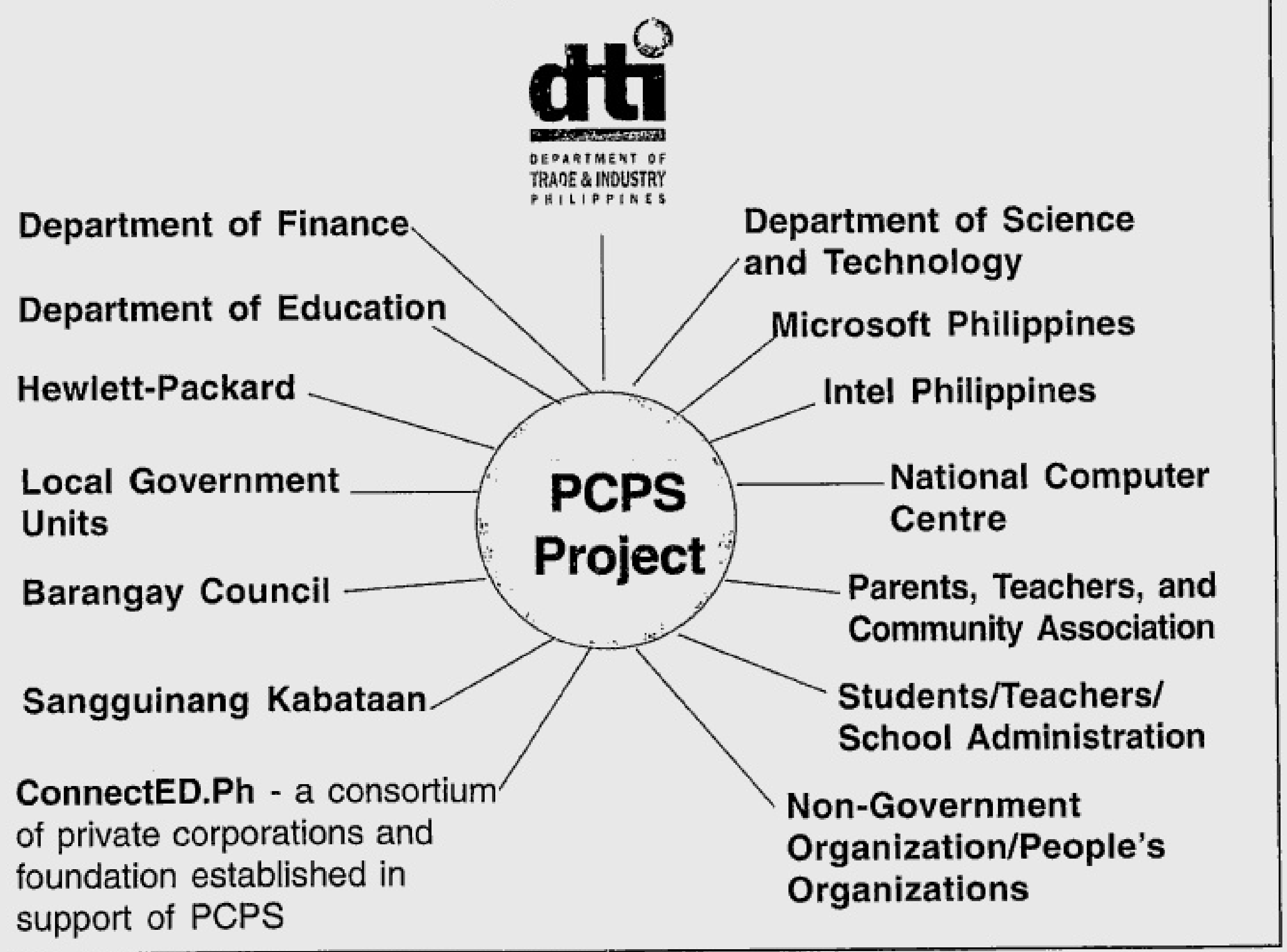
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Q.How do you see the future of IT literacy in the country?

A. According to DepEd's targets, 75% of public high schools and 50% of public elementary schools will have computers by 2009. Those figures are very conservative because they haven't considered the PCPS Phase 2 yet. Phase 2 can immediately cover 1,100 more schools or about 48% of the remaining 2,300 public high schools who have no computers. These would therefore mean that ICT education is now becoming a benchmark of public education.

Q.What are the prospects in store for students in particular and the country in general in this knowledge-based economy?

A. In a knowledge economy where Internet and digital convergence are the driving forces, work becomes boundless. US-based companies' finance and accounting services, research, engineering and design, customer care and all kinds of knowledge work, are now being done elsewhere, where costs can be optimized. This is called business process outsourcing. In this scenario, our country is positioning to be among the largest market for contact centers in Asia-Pacific in the next 5-7 years. This would mean generating higher-paying jobs and creating opportunities for better lives for those who are prepared to participate in this economy.

Q. Are you looking to pursuing a PCPS3, assuming on-schedule deployment of computer labs under Phase 2?

A. Plans for the the third phase are now underway provided we can sustain the interest and generous support of our PCPS benefactor, the Government of Japan. There still is a huge backlog out there, and while key results we are turning in are in themselves benchmarks, much must still be done. The feedback from our recipient schools and their students has been consistently positive and glowing. The commitment of community partners is also encouraging. If we go by key results, the usual indicators, and feedback from beneficiaries, there is every reason to be optimistic that we could get a phase 3.

Essay winners bared

Altered lives and bright hopes with IT competency

From page E1

and national levels. One winner each for Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao was picked.

Ms. Del Rosario's entry *My IT Awakening* won the top prize for Luzon, Cebreros' "*13*" for the Visayas, and Ms. Celi Liana A. Cruz' *Computers: A Great Promise* for Mindanao.

In his winning essay, Cebreros said he was transformed from a meek and shy student into a proud and confident individual. Though he is not endowed with the body of an athlete nor the good voice of a singer, he confessed, the PCPS project of DTI, has equipped him with more than enough to face the challenges of the fast changing information technology (IT)-dependent future. He said PCPS was a gift that clothed him from his "technological nakedness," curing him of his inferiority and making him proud to be a boy from the barrio.

"The PCPS opened up a new world for me to master. As long as I nourish its teachings, technical and personal, I will never get lost in the intricate puzzle that is the modern world," he said.

Ms. Del Rosario thanked DTI for choosing her school as one of the PCPS beneficiaries thus opening for her the wonders of IT and the opportunities that go with it. Describing computers as something Greek to her then, she said, "through the PCPS project, thank God, the word computer is no longer Greek to me."

Celi, on the other hand, claimed that it is not only the students, who felt the changes and developments brought by the computers provided by DTI but also the teachers, as well, and the community, more importantly.

The three national winners will receive P10,000 from DTI and a computer package from Microsoft. Along the way to the nationals they already received P2,000 from the DTI and a gift from Microsoft Phils. for the provincial elimination round and P5,000 courtesy of DTI as well as a gift from Microsoft in the regional competitions.

The regional winners were: Jett Gregory D. Dingal of Elpidio Quirino High School (NCR), Sunny Frances D. Hortelano of Pinukpuk Vocational School (CAR), John Anthony R. Bareng of Sarrat National High School (Region 1), Mayford Favila of Enrile Vocational High School (Region 2), Kristina Marie L. Laya of Nueva Ecija National High School (Region 3), Vanessa Anne D. Gonzales of Congressional High School (Region 4A), Rey Anthony M. Saguid of Leuteboro National High School (Region 4B), Gilian P. Gegawin of David Moises Memorial High School (Region 6), Maria Soccoro L. Flores of Demetrio Alviola National High School (Region 7), Daisy R. Bustillo of Zamboanga City High School –Main (Region 9), Johainah T. Mohamad of Iligan City East High School (Region 10), Wilcelyn Catomao of Monkayo National High School (Region 11) and Philip Celloy Cascara of Campo National High School (CARAGA).

The essay writing contest had some 850 entries from PCPS recipient schools all over the country.

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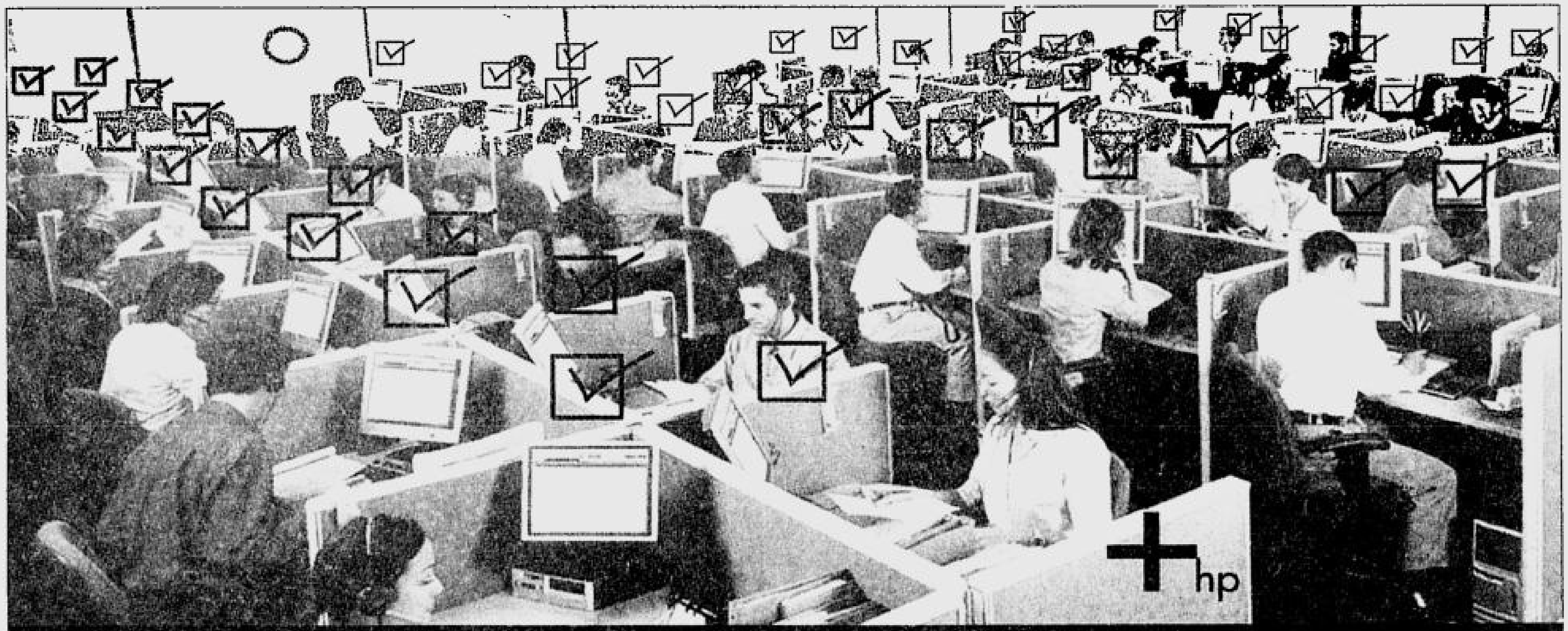

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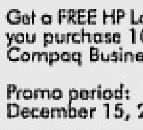

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PCPS Student Essay Writing Contest 2003

My IT awakening

Rizalyn C. del Rosario
Winner for Luzon

Computers?

I can say that, before, the word computer was something Greek to me. Well, I thought the word simply refers to a person who does some sort of calculations to arrive at some sums, products or quotients.

Then later on, I remember, some friends of mine introduced to me visual games they played on a television. It was called Nintendo. Other children my age called it computer games. So, I got the notion then that a computer is a video stuff that kids play a lot until their fingers get numb and their eyes almost drop.

Later on, as I was watching TV, I found out that a computer is actually a machine that homo sapiens manipulate so it could help them with their work. But my idea about it was so limited, vague and outmoded. Gee, it makes me smile to recall how ignorant I was.

It also amuses me now to remember my experience when a teacher of mine sent me for a little errand to the school computer laboratory. It was the first time I went up there. How my jaw hanged while I watched with wonder how the images displayed on the computer screens changed. Some of the screens turned into aquariums; some suddenly showed crawling worms that made me shiver, some suddenly blurted swirling objects of different hues. How my eyeballs rolled as my gaze tried.to follow and ride the flying shapes that appeared. Boy, I almost bumped on the wall as I walked out the door with my neck still craned towards the screens, and with my eyes still glued on the fascinating shapes that zigzagged, seesawed, zoomed and waltzed.

I was already in the school canteen but my mind still lingered on what I saw in the computer room. Aside from the interesting images on the screen, I also started to mentally review other things that I saw there. One student was busy typing on what looked like a long typewriter. After a while, he held the white palm-sized stuff that sat on the table, rubbed it on a blue pad while he squinted on the screen where a small arrow squirted. After a while, he stood up to get some bond papers and inserted them on another machine. The machine ate the blank papers and when they came out they weren't blank anymore. Hah! With that one, I wasn't very much surprised anymore. I had already seen something like that before in the accounting office, except that there, the paper came out slowly, by the dits and dots sound.

I told myself that somebody, I would also operate a computer the way that cool student in the computer laboratory did. I crossed my finger to it as I dreamed and prayed.

Prayers are indeed powerful because not long after that, I found myself inside the computer lab. Being a Senior student already, I now have a computer subject. How my heart leapt as I entered the computer room. I felt intimidated though when I sat face to face with the monitor. I felt unsure of myself yet I was excited at the same time. My, what an overwhelming experience! My unsettled feelings gradually vanished as our teacher gave us the step-by-step instruction on what to do.

For the next days that came, I was acquainted with the computer. Aside from learning how to encode, I also learned how to research on it. How I enjoyed exploring and using the Encarta Encyclopedia and other amazing instructional programs installed in it. It made researching easier for my classmates and me. All it takes is to do the timesaving *copy-paste* process. Learning also became more fun all those multi-media presentations. How i enjoyed viewing them.

To make the long story short, I indeed learned how to operate a computer. Cool, huh?

Hey, a few days ago, a freshman student entered the computer room while I was gloriously printing some articles for our school paper. Without meaning to do so, I felt my chest involuntary broadening as he eyed what I was doing. Hmm... I knew that look in his cherubic eyes. As I deftly clicked the mouse and pressed Enter with a rather exaggeratedly poised finger, I couldn't help but smile while silently thanking God, DEp. Ed., DOST and DTI.

According to our Principal, it was through the partnership of the three government agencies I have just mentioned that this important breakthrough of integrating computer education in our curriculum became possible. It was through the effort of the Department of Trade and Industry that our school, together with 999 other public high schools in the country received the twenty units of personal computers. This program called the DTI PCs for Public Schools Project aims to give public school students access to updated computer technology to prepare and help them succeed in the present world.

What a timely answer to our needs! Now, this brings to mind how my aunties who graduated from public schools a few years ago complained about being left out by their classmates in college. They related that those luckier dudes who graduated from private schools enjoyed a big advantage over them because the guys already had background in computer. They? Oh, they struggled with their research works because they were computer illiterate.

I'm glad I'm not going to suffer the same fate. With the computer lessons and tasks that we have, I am quite confident I can be at par with my private school contemporaries. I talked to one a few days ago. Based from what I had squeezed from our sharing, I think we are just equal. She can do multimedia presentations, simple spreadsheets, cards and other cute things through the computers. So can I. She does her research works in computers. So do I.

Through the help of concerned people behind the PCPS Project, thanks God, the word computer is no longer Greek to me.

Life's hardships forced Rizalyn C. del Rosario's separation from her family. Born to a poor farmer-couple with nine other children, Rizalyn chose to live with her aunt in Tigaon, Camarines Sur, for a stab at a good education.

Unlike others who would had easily succumbed to their limitations, the quietly reserved young lass persevered and took her family's plight as a challenge. Under the watch of her caring aunt Rosalinda Cadiz, a public school teacher who describes Rizalyn as studious and hardworking, she has been making her mark and is about to graduate at the San Rafael National High School in Tigaon, on her way to a brighter future. For Valerio and Tashana, her parents, she is their pride, hope and inspiration.

Proof of Rizalyn's excellence is her being chosen as one of the national winners (for Luzon) of the DTI's PCPS Essay Writing Contest conducted by the department as a measure on the relevance and success of the PC distribution program on beneficiary schools. She will be receiving her award and prize of P10,000 plus a computer package from Pres. Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and Sec. Mar Roxas at the launching of PCPS 2.

Roxas calls for IT proficiency among LGUs:

Automation key to better gov't service

Around 250 local government units (LGUs) are slated to be the recipients of computer grants under the PCs for Public Schools Project (PCPS2)of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). Primarily intended as a technical support for public school students, the coverage of the program was extended to meet the needs of a much larger sphere of individuals.

The natural transition from public schools to LGUs came about when the community was given school-based IT access through the first phase of PCPS. In fact, Trade Secretary Mar Roxas considers community usage as one of the distinguishing features of the DTI project. He said, "under PCPS, community usage is given equal importance. LGUs as well as out-of-school youths, barangay officials, parents and other sectors are given access to school computer facilities."

In terms of weekly usage, LGUs spent an average of 3.17 computer hours in Mindanao, some 4.20 hours in Luzon, and around 5.25 hours in the Visayas region, Roxas reported, adding that, "this initial exposure has spawned community interest in computers and paved the way for the inclusion of LGUs as among the beneficiaries of PCPS 2."

The PCPS Project thus branched out to LGUs in need of computer package assistance as determined by the DTI. This remains true to the general orientation of PCPS 2 towards preparing students and public servants alike for an emergent new-world economy largely based on information and communications technology (ICT) and e-commerce.

"The LGUs need to be in the mainstream of the IT revolution," said Secretary Roxas, citing RA 8792 or the e-Commerce Act of 2000. This act mandates the e-commerce readiness of all government agencies, including LGUs, by the year 2000. DTI is the lead agency in e-commerce implementation.

Presently only some 170 of 1,496 municipalities have already automated their key local government operations. "Obviously, there is a backlog in the computerization of government units." Roxas said, pointing out that "this is where the second phase of PCPS comes in."

DTI, as a key monitoring agency for the e-Commerce Act, seeks to meet the increasing demand for computerization through the LGU component of the PCPS. The National Computer Center (NCC) is the project partner in charge of the development and distribution of LGU application systems.

PCPS aims to build the IT capabilities of selected LGUs by first providing the necessary computer facilities. From there, Roxas said, "the LGUs can utilize the computer technologies in automating their key administrative systems, such as business registration and licensing, real property tax administration, treasury operations and management information." Finally, there is capability training and monitoring of LGU personnel to ensure the successful implementation of the program.

Excellence in the new knowledge economy sets exacting standards upon individuals, groups and organizations. But IT proficiency will play an important role in helping the country's public servants improve their operations in key administrative systems for a more efficient delivery of services. In effect, the PCPS Project helps ensure a fast, efficient and reliable bureaucracy as a strong foundation for e-Commerce.

"We have to keep on investing in IT," Roxas said, stressing that "the continuous development and upgrading of our human resources is the key to our ability to maintain our competitiveness in a knowledge economy."

VISIT TO COMPULAB: First Secretary Kenusuke Matsumoto of the Japanese embassy (standing) visits the computer lab of Tagaytay City National High School, one of the recipient schools of the Personal Computers for Public Schools (PCPS) project. PCPS was made possible via funding support from the Japanese government's Non-Project Grant Aid.

With student-daughter as PCPS beneficiary

Market vendor looks forward to brighter future

A Lipa City market vendor has every reason to be optimistic and excited over the prospect of a brighter future for her family as her student-daughter acquires basic computer skills at the Lipa National High School, a beneficiary-school of the Personal Computers for Public Schools (PCPS) Project of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

Nenita Calimag, who lives with her daughter on Santan St. in Barangay Muntingpulo, ekes out a living for her family by selling vegetables at the Lipa City public market.

Her 16-year-old daughter Michell, now a fourth year student of the Lipa NHS, came home from school one afternoon with a bit of good news -- her school had been chosen one of the beneficiaries of DTI's PCPS project.

Michell was excitedly telling her mother that she was beginning to learn and appreciate the value of basic computer education.

With the computer laboratory set up by PCPS at the LNHS, she and her classmates now had become more interested, focused and inspired in their studies. "It is more conducive and enjoyable for us to focus on our studies," Michell said, adding that "learning how to use computers is indeed fun." They would now have the chance to develop their skills and competencies in computer technology.

Asked by her mother as to the prospects in store for her and her fellow students, Michell explained that with their basic computer skills, it would now be easier for them to pursue IT-vocational courses that could provide them "employable computer skills" to land better-paying jobs and enable them to pursue professional courses in college.

Michell is in fact already earning from the tutorial fees she gets paid for as a private tutor teaching basic computer skills to some grade schoolers and the younger high school students in their barangay.

Mother and daughter have expressed confidence that with the IT skills she has acquired from PCPS, the family would indeed be looking forward to a better life and a brighter future.

Both agreed they have DTI Secretary Mar Roxas to thank for this good fortune in store for their family.

The market vendor also cited Roxas for his "Palengke ng Bayan" program which ensures the sale of goods at the right prices for the right quality, a program which has also benefited her family in terms of attracting more buyers, thus generating increased sales of her goods.

Positive Notes

What beneficiaries are saying regarding PCPS:

"The project has a tremendous positive impact on our students: they became more interested, focused and inspired in their studies."

MR. RAUL M. MARIN, Head Teacher I
Bachawan National High School
San Agustin, Romblon

"It is more comfortable and enjoyable for us now to focus on our studies. Learning how to use computers is fun!"

MARK ADRIAN BANTIGUE, Student
Enriqueta Montilla de Esteban Memorial High School
Pulupandan, Negros Occidental

"Complicated tasks are now easy to do because of computers. Students are now always updated on the latest advancements in technology. Computers too give us leisure activity during our free time."

PAMELA JANE D. OCOL, Student
Iligan City National High School
Iligan City

"This will surely enable us to keep our students and teachers aware of the technological changes happening around the global community and equip them with computer skills for them not to be overwhelmed by technology and be able to manage the tremendous changes in their lives.

MRS. MINDA G. PRADO, Principal II
Bislig City National High School
Bislig City, Surigao del Sur

"This (project) is consistent with the current efforts of our local administration (on education)... I am very sure that this noble endeavour will be a lasting monument of your dedication to public service and your concern for the youth."

MR. ALFREDO C. LLOREN, Local Chief Executive
Inopacan, Leyte
Addressing a message to
DTI Secretary MAR ROXAS

ADVT.